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Laughing with Dame Siriþ

"Looking at what we laugh at may tell us a good deal about the value systems we live by and the fears we face" (Nelson and Thomson 275).

In his introduction to *Middle English Humorous Tales in Verse*, literary critic and historical linguist George H. McKnight notes the conspicuous absence of humorous writings in English before the Norman Conquest. After 1066, McKnight proceeds, the development of English literature reflects inevitably the literary trends favored across the Channel in France. During this period, literary creation in the language of the new rulers develops a taste for themes that revolve around the "the gay and the humorous side of humanity" in an attempt to rebel against the inflexibility of chivalric and religious principles as well as stiff literary practices. In the midst of this atmosphere, McKnight concludes, the *fabliau* originates (ix-xi). Yet, whereas these comic tales abound in the literature written in French during the 13th century, English boasts few examples of *fabliaux* before Chaucer. *Dame Siriþ*, one of the short poems appearing in MS Digby 86 labels itself as one of these humorous tales in its manuscript title with *Ci commence le fablel e la cointise de Dame Siriþ.*[1] This 450-line *fabliau* appears to have been written ca. 1272-1283 and is currently kept at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

Although *fabliaux* prove scarce during the last part of the thirteenth century, the ensuing century witnesses the unprecedented proliferation of these tales thanks to Geoffrey Chaucer, who revitalizes the genre and endows it with a more genuine English character. Yet, partly on account of the bawdy themes that impregnate the majority of *fabliaux*, critics during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries appear to have purposefully neglected the significance of these tales in literary history. Indeed, not until the late years of the nineteenth century do *fabliaux* start to gain the interest of critics. Joseph Bédier's *Les Fabliaux*, appearing in 1893, represents the first and most exhaustive account of these mediaeval tales. In his study, Bédier defines the term *fabliau* as "*des contes à rire en vers*" (amusing tales in verse form; qted. in Schenck 22). Humor, as the French *rire* in Bédier's definition signals, constitutes one of the essential ingredients of *fabliaux*. This humor appears to stem from two main sources: plot and language. Although *fabliaux* no longer represent a taboo area of research and they have received much more attention from the critical community, many of the scholars such as Keith Busby, Robert E. Lewis, Thomas Honegger, or J.A.W. Bennett and G.V. Smithers who have studied *Dame Siriþ* as the only unquestioned non-Chaucerian English *fabliau* have focused primarily on elucidating its literary roots or proving its Englishness.

Few accounts on the humor of *Dame Siriþ* in particular exist and those that emphasize the comic nature of this tale do so by referring to its plot. However, in the case of *fabliaux*, their language constitutes as much a source of humor as the interactions between the characters. In this regard, this essay intends to shed light on some of the linguistic features of *Dame Siriþ* that serve to complement the humor of its plot.

Before attempting to analyze how *Dame Siriþ* achieves its comic effect by means of language, however, a historical and literary contextualization of the *fabliau* genre will prove helpful. To date, no satisfactory definition of the term *fabliau* exists. Although Bédier's normative definition (amusing tales in verse form) serves as a practical starting point for those wishing to deepen in the study of *fabliaux*, the definition soon becomes too simplistic and does not seem to encompass certain literary creations that have also received the stamp of *fabliau*. At the same time, its phrasing provides too much room for interpretation and blurs the dividing line between this genre and elaborate rhyming jokes or anecdotes.[2] Following a descriptivist method to talk about *fabliaux* avoids the dangers of generalization and reduction inherent in definitions and provides readers with a more accurate overview of the various characteristics of the genre.

In terms of origin, the *fabliau* genre emerged in France during the 13th century. The term *fabliau* itself, meaning "little tale," comes from a northern dialectal version of the word *fableau* and ultimately traces its origin back to the Latin *fabula* (tale) (Busby 70). Regarding the reason for its nascence, the majority of the critics agree that the *fabliau* came forth in opposition to and as a parody of the dominating literary tendencies—romance and heroic *gestes*[3]—with an aim to concentrate on everyday life. The *fabliau*, though, does not spring from a vacuum. It finds precedents in literary history, principally in the form of fables and *exempla*.[4] The similarity among these forerunners resides in their moralizing function. Conversely, although *fabliaux* also incorporate some sort of instructive motif, they differ from their precursors in that their moral is less conspicuous, and, most importantly, less serious. In them, society scorns the proud and the vain but also grants victory to dishonest characters and reprimands the naïve, the chaste, or the virtuous for the sake of humor.

Concerning the plot, the action, which is straightforward and appears stripped of stylistic adornment, gravitates around a ruse. In many of the examples, this wile involves adultery, but this ruse can take other forms. The characters of *fabliaux* belong to relatively humble layers of society. They are for the most part peasants, merchants, guild workers, their wives, and clerics. Further, a binary pair of characters is essential in any *fabliau*: the duper and the duped. The dupers possess a developed sense of shrewdness while the duped are usually honest and older than their tricksters.[5] Their interactions typically take place in

the present (*nunc*) and in rural settings (*hic*), which endow the tale with a local color. The tone is normally bawdy and, as Keith Busby cleverly points out, "there are few subjects that are taboo" in a *fabliau* (71). In terms of form, they appear written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets and tend to be short.

Ascertaining the audience of these tales has constituted one of the most contentious tasks among scholars. Joseph Bédier and Per Nykrog, the pioneers in the study of *fabliaux*, sparked this discussion by circumscribing the audience of *fabliaux* to bourgeois or aristocratic people. Based on the argument that the *fabliau* is a burlesque of the romance, it seems appropriate to assume that the audience must have been familiar with both genres in order to appreciate the humorous content of these compositions. By contrast, Keith Busby disagrees with the idea of a homogenous audience and supplies the argument that, because of their character, they must have been pleasing to numerous audiences (72). The matter still remains one of the Gordian knots of medieval literature. Arguing that the uneducated peasantry could not have enjoyed the parody present in *fabliaux* is debatable since romances may have reached the ears of country dwellers through a traveling trouvère. Perhaps it is safer to assert that the illicit, bawdy actions and the sometimes vulgar and obscene language characteristic of *fabliaux* have the ability to arouse laughter in all kinds of audiences.

Dame Siriþ coincides in numerous points with the generic description of *fabliaux* above. The action, which proceeds swiftly and without long descriptions or extensive soliloquies, revolves around the stratagem involving a weeping dog that Wilekin and Dame Siriþ play on the initially chaste Margeri. As in the majority of *fabliaux*, a virtuous person embodies the gullible victim and the duper succeeds in his treacherous ruse. In addition, the characters belong to the middle and lower classes of society. Dame Siriþ represents a destitute old woman who relies on her ruses to supply her basic needs and Wilekin, though *wis of lore*, is not rich of purse. The setting, somewhere near Botolfston, is local, too, and the time of the action, though not specifically defined, takes place in the present. The plot, as is customary in other *fabliaux*, incorporates humorous situations that spring from the disparities between the actions of the characters, in particular Wilekin and Margeri, and their expected courtly behavior. This same disparity endows the *fabliau* with its burlesque tone. While the audience might expect Wilekin to embody the virtues of the courtly lover, their expectations are denied for they are faced with the debased form of a hero. Instead of a handsome and brave knight of lands yonder, Wilekin is nothing more than a tonsured local clerk primarily concerned with having sex with Margeri. Likewise, the *fabliau* has traded the princess of the romance for a bourgeois wife who, although initially virtuous, surrenders quickly to the

adulterous proposals of Wilekin for fear of being metamorphosed into a dog. Along with the incongruities of the plot, the language of *Dame Siriþ* contributes greatly to the comic effect of the tale.

In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, David Crystal claims that the basis for linguistic humor resides in "deviating from language norms [and]... breaking the linguistic expectations of the listener" (62). *Dame Siriþ* accomplishes this comic linguistic effect in a variety of ways: through the use of incongruous names, differences of register, vulgar language, and sexual allusions. In addition, the rupture of linguistic expectations may also occur on a phonetic level. It is regrettable to note that there exists no way to ascertain how the minstrel might have recited the poem. That is, the written word in the manuscript cannot provide any information about the suprasegmental features of the person who read this poem—in particular, his voice pitch. Since more than seventy-five percent of *Dame Siriþ* is in dialogue form, it is safe to assume that changes in pitch to emulate the voice of male and female characters and to differentiate the turns in the conversation might have been one of the strategies available to the minstrel who delivered the poem, much to the amusement of the audience.

The first source of linguistic humor in this tale corresponds to the choice of names for the characters. The audience finds that the *hende* lover *gouþlich under gore,/ and cloþed in fair sroud* (ll. 5-6) bears no other name than Wilekin. What might sound as an appropriate name for modern readers may have triggered the laughter of the medieval listeners/readers. The name derives from the composition of the word *wil* and the suffix *–kin*. According to the *Middle English Dictionary* (*MED*), *wil* denotes the modern English *will, pleasure*. Interestingly, as its orthography shows, the name incorporates a euphonic *e* between the first word and the suffix. This innocent *e* creates an ambiguous phonological association between this *wil* and the also Middle English *wile* related to the verb *wilen* (to make dupes of people, act as a beguiler). For its part, the suffix *–kin*, which appears in the modern *mannequin* (literally "little man") and in modern German as *–chen*, denotes the diminutive. Regardless of whether the audience interpreted the first part of the name as a form of *wil* or probably the most accurate *wile*, the suffix *–kin* belittles Wilekin's prowess either as a lover or as trickster. The plot of the poem matches perfectly with the choice of name. As a lover, in contrast with the values of his genuine courtly counterpart, Wilekin behaves in a cowardly manner and requires guarantees from the loved one before announcing his love. When Margeri urges Wilekin to announce her the reason of his visit, he replies to her with *Bote on þat þou me nout bimelde* (l.38). By contrast to the romance hero, whose love is unconditional, Wilekin demonstrates his fear for Margeri's husband's possible retaliation should he discover the clerk's unethical dealings with Margeri.

Further, as a trickster, Wilekin lacks independence and must avail himself of a procuress in order to execute his plan.

The name of Margeri, a variation of Margarit(e), arrives in Middle English through French from the Greek *margaritas* (pearl). It denotes also the color white and becomes an epithet for purity and virginity. The meaning of the name seems to pay homage to the initial fidelity of Margeri, but the purity of her name becomes tainted with her readiness to engage in sexual activity with Wilekin to avoid the most dreaded outcome of being transmogrified into a bitch for refusing his amorous advances. Also oxymoronic appears to be the title that Siriþ boasts. *Dame*, from Latin *domina* (owner of a household) refers to a woman of rank. Although the poem does not prove clear as to whether Dame Siriþ is truly a *wrecche þat is wo* (l.298), she declares to Wilekin that *wiþ gode men almesdede / ilke dai mi lif I fede* (ll. 207-208). Thus, the possibility that she belongs to the upper crust of medieval society does not find any foundations in the poem. After all, she requires *mede* (l.438) not only from Wilekin but also from the audience as she announces at the end:

And wose is onwis,
And for non pris
Ne con geten his levemon,
I shal, for mi mede,
Garen him to spede,
For ful wel I con. (ll. 445-450)

At any rate, the title of *Dame* seems to match more appropriately with her vocation of amateur procuress (the modern *madam*) than with her position in the medieval social echelon. As with the plot, the humor in the names derives from incongruity, in this case in comparison with the characteristics of the person they name.

The use of sophisticated words of French origin seems also to collide with the character of Dame Siriþ. In the thirteenth century, when the aristocracy uses French and this language exudes connotations of power and prestige, it would seem odd, if not pretentious, for a lower-class woman to use words such as *mesaventer* (202), *juperti* (276), *maistri* (277), instead of the more popular Germanic-based *wrecchednesse*, *wile*, or *hindre*. The former, along with other instances such as *gin* (289), *nausine* (306), and *grantise* (414) give off an aura of finesse. The ludicrousness emerges when the audience realizes that the same person who has been uttering the previous words commands Wilekin to "love" Margeri in such a manner:

Goddot so I wille; /And looke þat þou hire tille/ And strek out hire þes (ll. 439-441).

The disparity between linguistic registers constitutes one of the characteristic elements of the *fabliaux*. Robert E. Lewis claims that "much of the humor comes from the juxtaposition of the courtly and artificial language on the one hand (spoken by non-courtly characters) and the colloquial, natural, realistic language interspersed with fragmentary sentences and proverbial wisdom, on the other" (252). The poem shifts from the conventions of the *fine langue* inherent in the *fin amour* to more natural, not to mention vulgar, language on various occasions. An example of the disparity between linguistic registers emerges soon in the poem. As Wilekin gathers strength to declare his passionate love, he addresses Margeri with: *Dame, if hit is þi wille, / Boþ dernelike and stille / Ich wille þe love* (ll. 85-87). The clerk, in keeping with romance practices, starts by referring to the lover with a term of endearment (*dame*), mitigates the strength of his proposal with a conditional clause that transfers power to the loved one (*if hit is þi wille*), and incorporates a reference to secrecy (*dernelike*). Regarding this latter component, Lewis claims that "*fin amour*... dictated that a love affair had to be kept secret in order to preserve the lady's good name" (254). Although Wilekin's motivations to conceal his possible relationship with Margeri respond to a more egoistic goal of self-defense, his proposal strives to emulate the norms of courtly language. By contrast, Margeri, ascertaining Wilekin's true purpose, rejects his proposal with a candid, not entirely courtly *Ich were ounseli if Ich lernede / To ben on hore. / Þat ne shal nevere be / Þat I shal don selk falsete / On bedde ne on flore* (ll. 98-102). Here, Margeri, disregarding the principles of romance diction, feels no remorse for "embellishing" her discourse with a vulgar expression such as *hore*. Considering that written literature before the genre of the *fabliaux* served in many cases a didactic, intellectual, or, at least, serious purpose, the first audiences of this genre must have blushed and smiled upon hearing the intrusion of such words.

Not all the references to the vulgarity in *Dame Siriþ*, though, are transparent. Sexual allusions appear in euphemistic disguise. Examples such as *hire tille* (l.440) and *strek out hire þes* (l.441) that do not mention the sexual act directly serve to build a sense of involvement between the beguilers and the audience.[6] The first reference to sex appears in lines 83 and 84 where Wilekin first expresses his envy to "possess," as her husband does, Margeri's body: *Him burþ to liken wel his lif / þat migtte* ***welde*** *secc a vif / in privite*. The verb *welde* (lit. "to wield") sheds here its more literal meaning to acquire a more figurative one which arouses the thought of a man groping *in privite* the pearly Margeri. In fact, the *MED* records the meaning of *welde* as "to have somebody as a lover; also, to possess a lover." Soon in the plot the audience discovers that Wilekin's advances center around a rather lustful version of love so the public becomes alert for when Wilekin will drop another hint about sex. The next one appears in line 132: *won*. The use of this term in English is analogous to the French *joi* and sparks allusions not only to a general wellbeing but also to an active sexual life

in secret. Once Margeri rejects the advances of Wilekin, he leaves to think *boþe nigt and dai / hire al forto wende* (ll. 150-151). The audience sees through this little passage the *wile* in Wilekin's own name at work. Not content with Margeri's retort, the clerk sets himself to scheme a stratagem in order to *change* her mind. But the passage would not imply any kind of humor if that were the only meaning of ***wende***. For people in the thirteenth century, though, the verb also had the figurative meaning "to penetrate, to pierce," as attested by the *MED*, and it would sound to medieval ears in much the same fashion as *screw* sounds to our modern ones. Another such skillful use of suggestive language occurs on ll. 220 to 223: *He weste þat þou hous coupest* ***saute***. */ Help, Dame Siriþ, if þou maut, / to make me wiþ þe sueting* ***saut***. The humor in this case lies in the connection, again, between primary and secondary meanings of the word *saut*. Shortened from the French *assaut*, the term served to denote a "physical or military assault," "a jump, leap," but also "a state of sexual arousal" as in "ben in saut" (to be in heat). The references to sexually connotative language appear repeatedly in the poem, above all through Wilekin's ambiguous use of the highly loaded meaning of the word *love*. Apart from the "spicy" nature of the vocabulary, as Henry Seidel Canby baptized the language of the fabliaux (205), this specific feature together with the previous ones acquire a stronger humorous significance on account of the mismatch between what people at the time expected from literature and the nature of the tone that characterizes this genre.

These are but some of the linguistic devices through which *Dame Siriþ* is able to reach, as Keith Busby claims, a heterogeneous audience comprised of people from the different social strata of late thirteenth-century England. The aristocracy would have taken pleasure in the populace / bourgeoisie's thwarted emulation of courtly love and in their parody. For its part, the populace, although probably not fit to interpret the burlesque of the *fin amour* would have derived great enjoyment from its language. *Dame Siriþ* incorporates a wealth of humorous linguistic motifs. Looking at the amusement inherent in its plot will make us laugh; concentrating on the humor in its plot and language will make us roar.

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Notes

[1]All quotations from *Dame Siriþ* are extracted from Elaine Treharne's edition of the poem.

[2] Regarding the difficulty to define adequately the genre of *fabliaux*, please refer to Mary Jane Schenk's "Functions and Roles in the Fabliau," or Keith Busby's "*Dame Sirith* and *De Clerico et Puella*."

[3] Melissa Furrow refers to this consensual description of *fabliaux* as anti-romances as she states: "Fabliau exists in a sort of adversarial relationship to romance, borrowing some of its trappings to make the kinship clearer" (7).

[4] Henry Seidel Canby sees analogies between this genre and earlier fables and apologues (202). For her part, Mary Jane Schenk finds connections between the *fabliaux* and Latin *exempla* (22). Robert E. Lewis relates the *fabliau* and a set of fifteen *comediae* in Latin written in the second half of the twelfth century (243).

[5]As Mary Jane Schenck examines in her essay, the essential function of a *fabliau,* which she tags as "Misdeed," derives from the interaction between these two characters. The Misdeed can take several forms whether it be gaining sexual favors from a married woman, succeeding in stealing a valuable belonging or simply ridiculing the trickster's neighbor (34).

[6] Please see Philippe Marquis' "Quelques procédés humoristiques dans le fabliau de Dame Sirith": "L'utilisation d'un register plus direct aurait pour consequence majeure de rompre ce sentiment de complicité entre les personages et le public" (26).

Marina Lopez Casoli

Dame Sirith: A Masterpiece of Humor?

Dame Sirith, the earliest known fabliau in English, appears in Digby MS 86, which is dated between 1272 and 1300 (Cook 141). Despite its introductory headnote describing the poem as a *fablel*,[1] the Anglo-Norman term for fabliau, or a tale meant to entertain, one may wonder about the humorous effectiveness of this tale. Many scholars, such as Keith Busby (80), Nicolai Von Kreisler (380), or A. J. Mittendorf (9) have described *Dame Sirith* as a well-told story of outstanding comedic artistry, while others, such as George McKnight (xxi) or Henry S. Canby (205) doubt its absolute artistic value and consequently its humoristic achievement. It is possible that the former scholars may find *Dame Sirith* so extraordinary mainly by virtue of its uniqueness, as it is the only pre-Chaucerian English fabliau known and the only one to parody the story of the weeping bitch (McKnight xxii); and in trying to convince their readers, they may assign extremely humorous qualities to that which is not as comic. On the other hand, the latter may be overlooking features that do make it a worthy comic tale if studied more closely. As a result of these divergent claims, the reader may be tempted to value this particular fabliau merely based on individual perspectives. However, personal taste is not enough to estimate *Dame Sirith*'s comic effectiveness because the modern readers' understanding of entertainment may judge a medieval tale anachronistically. Therefore, it is key to consider not only the poem's textual elements but also its socio-cultural background, that of a Medieval English audience. The present essay will discuss the poem's alleged humor based on its style and social context so modern readers can judge critically the extent to which *Dame Sirith* is actually humorous.

The origins and characteristics of the English fabliaux date back to the French conquest of England in 1066. After their victory over England in the Battle of Hastings, the French brought to the island a whole set of cultural and literary expressions, including the fabliaux, a common French genre at the time. Though many French fabliaux were in circulation by the time *Dame Sirith* was written,[2] one can trace this tale's origins beyond French analogues. According to George H. McKnight, the version of the weeping-bitch story appears earlier in oriental literary tradition (xxvi).[3]

It is interesting to note that while the fabliaux poets based their tales mostly on oral popular ones, they also derived them from tales intended for oral instruction, which may have been the actual origin of the comic genre (McKnight xi). Jack A. Bennett and G. V. Smithers explain that "early Western versions of *Dame Sirith* are short prose anecdotes [...] meant to edify," and their

origins were in fables and exempla (77). Nicolai Von Kreisler also emphasizes the work's moralizing purpose by stating that "consideration of the poem in the light of its European analogues indicates that it is basically moral in its intent and that the poet, in his attempt to expose and to ridicule some of the most conventional targets of his day, is a highly skilled and creative artist" (379-80). But even if the original tales may have been instructive, little is left in *Dame Sirith* to prove so for the reasons this essay will provide. However, Von Kreisler is correct in calling the reader's attention to the fabliau's historical background, as the text may still contain traces, albeit vague, of the didactic purpose of the genre.

Perhaps the difficulty in identifying the poem's purpose may have led to the difficulty in defining its genre. Many literary scholars have attempted to define "fabliau."[4] The most succinct definition is that offered by the medievalist Joseph Bédier: "des contes à rire en vers" or comic tales in verse (qtd. in Nelson and Thomson 257). However, this definition is too narrow as there are other comic tales in verse that are not fabliaux (Busby 70) and others, like *Dame Sirith*, that feature characteristics of a different genre.[5] Keith Busby is sensible in pointing out the "modern mania for definitions" (70) and cautiously provides a "*description*" not a "*definition*" of fabliaux (71):

> The *fabliaux* vary in length from about fifty to over one thousand lines and are almost without exception written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets. They [...] are frequently—but not exclusively— concerned with [...] "low" life. [They] are set in a rural or urban (but not normally aristocratic) setting, and the characters are peasants, merchants, their wives, and priests or monks; the nobility appear only infrequently [...]. In *fabliaux*, [...] we may see examples of native peasant cunning, which nearly all involve practical jokes; sex, food, and excrement also feature widely [...], and there are a few subjects that are taboo. Common to most of the *fabliaux* is the idea of ruse or deception [...]. (71)

Dame Sirith clearly falls within this genre. The poem consists of 450 lines, several of which are in octosyllabic rhyming couplets following the French fabliau measure (Hines 46). The story takes place in an urban not an aristocratic setting with ordinary townspeople for characters: a clerk named Wilekin, a wife by the name of Margeri, her absent husband (a merchant)—the three already completing the typical fabliau triangle—and Dame Sirith, a go-between. A crafty stratagem aimed at getting and/or providing a chance for sex is what brings these characters together. An old woman, Dame Sirith, is paid by a clerk to trick a younger married one, Margeri, into accepting his pleas of love. To this end, Dame Sirith feeds her dog mustard to make it cry and to convince Margeri that it is Dame Sirith's daughter who was transformed into a dog by a man

whose advances she had rejected. The trick is successful and Margeri takes the clerk, Wilekin, for her lover.

At this point, it is appropriate to discuss the features of *Dame Sirith* that scholars seem to overstate when admiring the poem's stylistic artistry and its achieved humor. To begin with, the poem is quite simply developed. Transitions are too abrupt and little does the reader know about the setting or about how or why certain actions follow or result from others. For instance, the readers have no idea how Wilekin knows about Margeri or that her husband is away (Do the characters live in a small town where everyone knows about everyone else?); the poet does not tell the audience why his friend refers him to Dame Sirith (Who is she? Is she known in town for doing favors in exchange for money?); the readers do not know if Dame Sirith is planning from the very beginning on getting money out of the situation (Does she usually do this?); they do not know either whether or not she is involved in witchcraft (Is Dame Sirith pretending that she is not or is she really not a witch? Is this at all relevant? If not, why does the poet bring this up?); the poet fails to tell us how Dame Sirith knows where to find Margeri (Does Wilekin tell her where to find Margeri?); it is not clear either how Dame Sirith explains to Margeri where she finds Wilekin and how she does this so fast after Margeri begs her to get him (Does Margeri describe Wilekin to Dame Sirith so she can find him easily?). These unanswered questions show that the poet leaves too much out. Adding some more information would not necessarily have jeopardized the length of the poem to fit within the genre, and perhaps it could have helped in offering the audience a well-rounded plot more worthy of laughter.

Another aspect of the poem that scholars should observe more carefully at the time of judging the poet's humoristic artistry is character development. Granted, fabliaux are relatively short productions in which the author does not have too much leeway to develop either plot or characters in detail, but it is precisely this factor that can put a work's artistic value at risk if not done carefully. In *Dame Sirith* little do we know about the characters in the poem other than their names, occupation and/or marital status. Characterization in this poem depends primarily on suggestive details about the characters rather than on their actual actions or background. The resulting problem is that the reader cannot see clearly why the characters behave the way they do. For instance, Wilekin, in the beginning presented as a courtly lover who truly loves Margeri and is helpless if he cannot attain her love, suddenly reveals at the end that he wishes to *plaie* with Margeri (438). From this, many scholars, such as John Hines, have often interpreted his behavior as meanly lustful and lacking in true love (48-9). However, the reader cannot really gather from this subtle euphemism that all Wilekin wants is to "tille" Margeri and "strek out hire þes" (440-1). It is Dame Sirith, not Wilekin, who is so blunt about what Wilekin and

Margeri do in private. Moreover, it is not fair to say he is not in love and only wishes to have sex with Margeri as there is not much evidence in the text to say so. Wilekin seems to be simply infatuated:

> To lovien he bigon
> On weddod wimmon [...]
> His herte hire wes al on,
> þat reste nevede he non.
> þe love wes so strong [...]. (7-12)

He tells Dame Sirith that he lives a life in "tene" and "hounsele" for a woman he has "iloved . . . moni dai" and fears he will either go crazy or kill himself (174-183). From these lines, the audience only knows about Wilekin's distressed heart. The poet may have intended to portray Wilekin as a despicable lascivious man but the way he does so is not as evident as Robert Lewis suggests (248). This results in the readers hastily judging the character from arguably suggestive details rather than from concrete knowledge of his intentions. True enough, one can frown upon Wilekin's cowardly request to Margeri to keep his intentions secret—"Boþ dernelike and stille / Ich wille þe love" (85-6)—and upon his unscrupulous method in winning Margeri over against her will by paying to deceive her. But from this one cannot judge fairly whether or not he honestly loves her.

Margeri is another underdeveloped character that scholars have misjudged. The only things the audience knows about her are that she is the wife of a merchant who is away on business, that she refuses Wilekin's advances because she loves and is faithful to her husband, and that she is naively tricked by Dame Sirith to take Wilekin for her lover under the threat of him turning her into a bitch. Many scholars have criticized Margeri for her unconvincing naiveté (Hines 50-1), for her sudden willingness to accept a lover having hypocritically rejected him so firmly before (Busby 79), and for her selfish interest in saving her neck instead of staying loyal to her husband (Von Kreisler 385). However, once again nothing in the text clearly suggests these impressions, or if there is, it is, once more, only through vague suppositions more than through textual actualities that the readers draw conclusions about Margeri's moral or ethical conduct. The audience cannot state that her gullibility is dubious because the fact is that she is gullible (nothing in the text suggests to the contrary other than her arguable sudden change). She did believe in the go-between's distress and that she could be turned into a dog, in which case one cannot but sympathize with her more than anything. Her sudden shift from pledging unconditional love for her husband to taking Wilekin for her lover is not as revealing as Lewis claims (248); more than a fault in her morals, the shift reflects a fault in the poet's characterization skills as he leaves an important gap between her loyalty oath

and her drastic shift. In the face of being turned into an animal, and a despicable one at that during the Middle Ages,[6] many women then and today would understandably choose to save themselves rather than to suffer such a cruel destiny. And the audience must not forget that Margeri does not pick an option that makes her shrewdly triumphant over a foolish cuckolded husband. On the contrary, she has to choose between two equally abhorrent options: either she becomes a bitch, literally and figuratively, or she accepts unwillingly to betray her husband and have forced sex. From these choices, it is not clear in what way she is so selfish. But these speculations, just as those by scholars who interpret Margeri in the selfish manner the poet seemingly intended, do not characterize Margeri truthfully.

Dame Sirith is the only character that the poet appears to characterize better. Her conduct throughout the poem is quite ambiguous and certainly bawdy at the end. She readily accepts the job to deceive Margeri, and more so to lead Margeri into bed with a man she rejects. Dame Sirith also invokes the name of God in vain while she lies through her teeth at Margeri's door: "'Loverd', hoe seiþ, 'wo is holde wives, / þat in poverte ledeþ ay lives [...]'" (303-4), or when she states: "'Goed almitten do þemede, / And þe Loverd þat wes on rode idon, / ... As þilke Loverd þe forelde'" (322-6). Despite this, her lewd remarks to Wilekin toward the end of the poem come as a surprise. Though her behavior throughout the poem gives the readers the impression that she pretends her religiousness and her sense of dignity and solidarity, she does not really show the base personage one sees at the end. Once more, the poet exploits the final low blow of the poem without fully portraying still another character to show the audience the origin of the character's behavior.

Admittedly, however, while *Dame Sirith* may not *be remarkably* humorous, it does contain some comic elements that provoke in the audience, if not outright laughter, at least a grin. To understand how these elements work in achieving humor, it is necessary to consider some plot and linguistic features within the tale as well as the background of the audience. As stated earlier, the plot revolves around a trick, deception, a love triangle, and implicit and explicit sexual allusions. These are elements still used in many comedic representations today. One need not look further than at popular comedies such as the films *American Pie*, *Scary Movie*, *Borat*, the TV series *Jackass*, or at many popular jokes to find, if not all of these elements, at least some of them, including abundant scatological references, used to build up humor. So if these simple means of entertainment are capable of amusing us today, in an era of supposedly more education and when little seems to surprise or embarrass us, it is possible that a Medieval English audience, with less education and more emotionally and morally controlled by English puritanism (McKnight xviii), may have perceived plots such as *Dame Sirith*'s entertaining due to its unexpected risqué features.

According to Lisa Perfetti, during the Middle Ages "monastic rules often forbade laughter because it was thought to show pride or to interfere with prayerful contemplation." These rules affected not only monastic life but also the dwellings of the common people (4). Therefore, it is likely that the fabliaux could have served as a long sought release to society's inhibitions.

It is also worth considering that *Dame Sirith* is the first version of the weeping-bitch in which vice triumphs (McKnight 20). As mentioned earlier, this tale is based on pre-existing instructive and moralizing analogues. If the audience was familiar with them, then the contrast between those edifying stories and *Dame Sirith* may have had a comic effect on the public simply out of its unexpected contrast. Moreover, as the first known fabliaux in English, aside from pleasing an Anglo-Norman public, it may have helped to amuse an English-speaking audience that possibly felt more directly related to it by way of the linguistic connection and that thus may have been able to understand its humor better.

Another feature of *Dame Sirith* that undoubtedly helps to build up the comic effect is the use of language and its reliance on vulgarities and double-meanings.[7] Medieval fabliaux poets commonly used puns for the purpose of irony or satire, which the reader can observe in many instances in this tale. Some of the most obvious vulgar expressions come at the end of the fabliau. The first is a more subtle sexual pun made by Wilekin when he asks Dame Sirith to "[...] gange awai, / Wile Ich and hoe shulen plaie" (435). It is clear from the word "play" that Wilekin is not interested in engaging in a ludic activity but in taking Margeri to bed. Dame Sirith, on the other hand, responds in a most explicitly lewd fashion: "Goddot so I wille; / And loke þat þou hire tille / And strek out hire þes" (439-401). Here, the word *tille*, which Bennett and Smithers define as "work upon" from *tillen*, to "procure, gain," or "till, cultivate" (578), undoubtedly refers to the sexual act. Wilekin shall "plough" Margeri and procure or gain her in a base sexual conquest in which he will "stretch out her thighs." Another telling play on words is that suggested by Dame Sirith as she says: "On wicchecrafft nout I ne con, / Bote wiþ ode men almesdede / Ilke dai mi lif I fede [...]" (206-8). In this example, Dame Sirith's hypocritical use of the word *almesdede* in lieu of bribes, which would more accurately describe what she receives for her services, is quite clear.

The poet's apparent parody of courtly love discourse[8] and conventions is still another source of humor in this fabliau. The ideals of this code of conduct appear throughout the poem, either in formulaic phrases or in the juxtaposition of the characters' words and their actions. The word *hende*, for instance, meaning "courtly" or "courteous" is a characteristic term of the courtly love convention. The use of this word in the poem, such as in "Mi loverd is curteis mon and hende" (119) or "To Dame Siriþ þe hende" (154) is quite incongruent

for a bawdy context of low-life individuals whose actions are all but courtly. In this line the poet may have also intended a pun with the meaning "ready" or "prompt,"[9] as if implying Dame Sirith's readiness in accepting bribes and in plotting. According to Keith Busby, the phrase *swete lemmon*, also used in *Dame Sirith* (128), was "a standard mode of address of the lover to the lady in Middle English love poetry" (77).[10] The humor of this phrase lies in that Wilekin, who is not a noble personage and whose deceptive behavior is far from characterizing a true courtly lover, addresses Margeri, another non-courtly "lady," in that fashion. The poet also exploits the courtly convention of secrecy between the lovers. Wilekin's explicit concern for Margeri not betraying him (38) and for keeping their affair "Boþ dernelike and stille" (86) additionally undermines the subtlety of the courtly suitor who should assume his lover's understanding of their secret relationship.

This analysis leads to considering the unresolved debate initiated by Joseph Bédier and Per Nykrog concerning who the target audience of the fabliaux was (qtd. in Busby 71). Bédier suggested that fabliaux were meant for the bourgeoisie because the subject-matter was non-courtly. Nykrog, on the other hand, claimed that they pleased an aristocratic audience because of the parodied courtly-love conventions only the aristocracy could appreciate. It is possible, too, that the fabliaux were for a mixed audience instead of for one *or* the other. Since both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie were subject to the same strict religious enforcements, either could have found in the tale the same conduit for releasing their anxieties precisely because it is a "straightforward enough tale of unedifying bawdry" (qtd. in Hines 45).[11] It is still not clear who exactly the audience was for the fabliaux or particularly for *Dame Sirith*. Nevertheless, whether *Dame Sirith* was a parody of courtly love or merely a funny tale for lower life people, the way the poet conceived it may have pleased either audience to a certain extent. As John A. Burrow states, even the more polite readers could have appreciated the "logic and comedy of the fabliaux" (81).

The present essay suggests that in studying *Dame Sirith*, it is a mistake to either belittle or exalt its humor. Clearly, the poem tries to amuse; if the poet intended to keep any of its moralizing vestiges, these are lost among the different comic elements described above. After all, the sense of the absurd was already highly developed in pre-Chaucerian Medieval England (Tatlock 289). The question is how funny this poem may have been for a Medieval English audience. Readers today would be mistaken in judging the poem through modern views. As Busby states, "many of the fabliaux were not humorous *at least to our eyes* [emphasis added]" (70).[12] Though scholars have done much to understand Middle English literature and its cultural context, one cannot take their assumptions at face value because while much Medieval scholarship today is based on facts, much is also based on speculations. For this reason, being so assertive in finding *Dame*

Sirith an exquisite example of well-developed humor seems more a rash conclusion based on the poem's historical uniqueness than on factual evidence. One can sustain that the poem has some humorous moments that may have caused unrestrained laughter. But its "open hilarity," as McKnight asserts (xli), is dubious as is the poet's skill in offering a tale of sophisticated humor. Its unelaborated plot development, loose characterization, and its simple-minded appeal to bawdiness may render a comic effect, but to call *Dame Sirith*'s poet a "highly skilled and creative artist" (Von Kreisler 380) is to stretch the praise for his actual achievement.

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[1] "Ci comence le fablel e la cointise de Dame Siriþ." All quotations from *Dame Sirith* come from Elaine Treharne's edition, unless indicated otherwise. However, both for the title and the character's name, the preferred spelling was *th* following John Hines's explanation on the improbability of *z* as the original spelling for the name Sirith. (See Hines p. 43, note 1.)

[2] John Hines dates Digby MS. 86 containing this written version of the fabliau between 1272 and 1283 (p. 43).

[3] For an explanation on the Indian origin of *Dame Sirith* see Bennett and Smithers' *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, pp. 79-80 and Albert Stanburrough Cook's *The Literary Middle English Reader*, p. 141-2. George H. McKnight presents a complete "history of the tale in its migrations" in the Introduction to *Middle English Humorous Tales in Verse*, including the similarities between *Dame Sirith* and its pre-existing oriental and occidental versions.

[4] In "The Fabliau," Marie Nelson and Richard Thomson offer a quite comprehensive account of the different attempts scholars have made at defining a fabliau, pp. 255-8.

[5] In "The Narrator within the Performance: Problems with Two Medieval 'Plays'," Bruce Moore eloquently discusses the dramatic elements of *Dame Sirith*. Keith Busby also alludes to the text's susceptibility to being performed rather than narrated In "*Dame Sirith* and *De Clerico et Puella*" (see especially p. 75). Philippe Marquis also points out that during the Middle Ages in France, the terms *fableau, fablel, conte, dit, exemple, fable, lai, proverbe, cointise, truffe, rissé* coexisted indistinctively among authors (p. 22). As a result, the continental tales later imported into England may have already contained a fair share of mixed genres. On the other hand, while Bennett and Smithers note the extensive use of dialogue, they do not view *Dame Sirith* as a "full-blown drama" (pp. 78-79).

[6] A. J. Mittendorf discusses the connotations of dogs during the Middle Ages. He explains that though society has often seen dogs as faithful creatures, since Classical times literary works have also portrayed them as loathsome ones, even the Bible presents dogs as unworthy animals together with pigs. Painters too have depicted these canines in association with low-life environments such as brothels (12-3).

[7] Philippe Marquis offers an interesting analysis of the picturesque language in *Dame Sirith* (24-30).

[8] Thomas Honegger, however, states that *Dame Sirith* is less of a parody of courtly love language than of "a tale relating a well-known story with fresh vigour yet without unsettling the balance of the narrative structure" (86).

[9] See Francis H. Stratmann's *A Middle English Dictionary* edited by Henry Bradley.

[10] Busby offers a detailed analysis of the courtly love conventions exploited in *Dame Sirith* for the purpose of humor (see especially pp. 75-9).

[11] According to Hines, Swanton viewed *Dame Sirith* as a poorly written stock tale, "frivolous," "plain," and based on an "unadorned anecdote" (p. 45).

[12] Emphasis added.

Dominique Hoche

Charivari, Complaint, Chaucer and the Death of Captain America

Captain America is dead.

In the most recent issue of the venerable Marvel Comic, published each month since first appearing in 1941, "Cap" (as they call him) was assassinated with a well-placed sniper's bullet.

Such horror! Wait... no? You might roll your eyes and say that it's just a comic book, so who cares? James Likeks, a syndicated columnist, reminds us to be more wary of milestones like this in popular culture, since "comic books convey and reflect cultural messages to millions of youthful Americans, and the movie versions carry those messages around the world" (11). So what might be the cultural impact of Captain America's death?

Created by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, the comic *Captain America* debuted just months before the U.S. officially entered World War II, and the character remained a direct product of the fight against Nazism (Heilbrunn 29). During the last 66 years, over 210 million copies of the comic book have been sold in more than 75 countries. Captain America (known as Steve Rogers by day), has been featured in a 1944 movie serial, a 1991 direct-to-video film, live-action TV shows, toys and action figures (Aucoin and Kahn 6). He's also cropped up in songs, and his namesake has been taken in many movies, most notably Peter Fonda's character in *Easy Rider*, and Marvel has also begun production for a feature film, due for release in 2009. Cap's death on 7 March 2007 made CNN, Fox News, international headlines, and was covered in newspapers from New York to Los Angeles, Ottawa to London, Beijing to Sidney. Captain America's death resonated far beyond the marginalized comic book culture.

So why did Marvel kill him? That's the question – was it a publicity stunt, like Superman's "death" in 1993? Or does it reflect something deeper? Knowing Marvel, the answer is the latter; their heroes are not shining, but full of angst, introspection, and toleration of those who are different from mainstream societies' dictates of what is supposed to be normal. Unlike DC Comics, Marvel's characters have to pay taxes, keep jobs, raise children, and are politically aware of their society; a reflection of Marvel's choice to never shy away from examining political viewpoints, or having characters discuss real-world issues such as civil liberties. "And [so] in a classic example of art imitating life," writes columnist S.P. Sullivan,

> Marvel's fantasy-federal-government had started overstepping its authority and required all superheroes to register their secret identities. Rogers, ever the ardent defender of constitutionality, decided to fight against this mutant Patriot Act. His last enemy in a 60-year old struggle to uphold American ideals was his own government. If O. Henry were a comic book nerd, he would be incredibly pleased with the irony of Rogers' downfall. (MA Daily Collegian)

Obviously of late the Captain hasn't been the bastion of conservative ideals he was once considered, since many political pundits have claimed that the storyline is actually a comment on the U.S.'s anti-terrorism act, and an allegory for the political atmosphere in the U.S. today. While Cap began as a hero to fight the Nazis, whose fascism was antithetical to the American Way, during the Korean War he also fought Communism, a threat to American democracy. In the 1960's, Cap teamed up with one of the first African-American superheroes, and in the 1980's Marvel brought in one of Cap's childhood friends, and revealed that the buddy was a homosexual. In the Captain's sense of civic duty, he saw that being a patriot meant defending the United States of America, but not necessarily the laws of the United States government, so when the federal government began to be a threat to the American people, it, too, became an enemy to fight. Sobered and disillusioned by current events, Captain America turned against a government that had turned against its people, a striking message of protest from a comic book company.

The reactions to his death have had a huge range of responses. Kevin Garcia of the Brownsville Herald, Texas, summarized: "A conservative columnist equated the assassination to the moral degradation of America and a liberal blogger called it an analogy for what President George W. Bush has done to the country" (1). But most critics, by far, echo S.P. Sullivan's argument:

> The Marvel Universe, despite its superpowers and dramatics, contains many parallels to our own. The fictional federal government – faced with the issue of how to deal with several thousand walking weapons of mass destruction – took the easy way out, ignoring the constitution and enacting legislation that impinged [upon] civil liberties. Marvel created a thinly veiled allegory for our own present situation and turned Captain America into a comic book martyr for democracy. (MA Daily Collegian)

It's a tough sell to argue that Cap is a "martyr for democracy" because the state of democracy has become very ambiguous. But the social complaint and the allegory of cultural and political self-questioning are very clear. Like most myths, these are simple stories that examine something much larger and more complicated.

Thick Description

I see superhero comics as being a part of the *fabliaux* form of storytelling – and I can only speak for the Marvel Universe, as that is what I read – so for me they function as *fabliaux* morality lessons combined with medieval *charivari* activity and a heavy dose of the *complaint* tradition – that's my theory, at least.[1] If comics do function like this, then the national and international reaction to comic "events" like Captain America's death can be academically appreciated by popular culture scholars. Clifford Geertz, in his landmark text *The Interpretation of Cultures*, explains that:

> Such a view of how theory functions in an interpretive science suggests that the distinction, relative in any case, that appears in the experimental or observational sciences between "description" and "explanation" appears [in anthropology] as one, even more relative, between "inscription" ("thick description") and "specification" ("diagnosis") – between setting down the meaning particular social actions have for the actors whose actions they are, and stating, as explicitly as we can manage, what the knowledge thus attained demonstrates about the society in which it is found and, beyond that, about social life as such. (27)

In this particular case, the conceptual structure behind Captain America's death comes from a social action that depicts a mythical civil war in which the hero, the chief bearer of meaning, is assassinated outside of an honorable conflict. The storytellers of this event, who are cultural minorities, have created a social action whose meaning they wish us to understand to be a complaint about or protest against a majority culture's substance. The *complaint* is the general inscription, and the specification of this protest is a *charivari*.

A *charivari* (not to be confused with a good-humored post-wedding *shivaree*, although the origin is the same) is a social way of protesting a world out of joint, often called in England "rough music." According to E.P. Thompson, a *charivari* denotes

> a rude cacophony, with or without more elaborate ritual, which usually directed mockery or hostility against individuals who offended against certain community norms. The noise formed part of a ritualized expression of hostility [that could be] attenuated to a few scraps of doggerel... [or] could be elaborate, and might include the riding of the victim (or a proxy) upon a pole or a donkey; masking and dancing; elaborate recitatives; rough mime or street drama upon a cart or platform; the miming of a ritual hunt; or (frequently) the parading and burning of effigies; or, indeed, various combinations of all of these. (3-4)

All of this served to channel and control hostility, a way of displacing the violence by satire, by mocking the person by word or effigy. Thompson points out that "until the early nineteenth century, publicity was of the essence punishment" and the humiliation was immense. In most cases the effigy was burnt or buried, with a mock funeral service to complete the action, and to read a funeral service over someone still living was "the ultimate in excommunication" (7). The charivari was primarily a ritualized generational conflict that allowed a town or society's youth and people in subordinate social positions in general to have an "institutionalized method of responding to and correcting the misbehavior of older, more prosperous and authoritative individuals" (Boehrer 18).

When seen as a part of Marvel Comics' enactment of a *charivari*, Captain America's death (even by proxy as a comic book character) begins to gain additional levels of what Geertz calls "thick description." *Charivari* is appealing because it is a social action that can work only in a society that has not been encapsulated with an enforced justice system and bureaucracy, but instead still has justice that is enacted by and within the community itself – or, in this case, the comic book community that functions, as Bakhtin would say, in an eternal *carnivale*.

The social action is a *charivari*, but not one that is a physical event. It is, instead, a literary event appearing within the pages of a comic book series, and unlike other, more familiar literary settings, the event is a carefully orchestrated "Civil War" spread out among a dozen or more individual comic book plotlines; weaving characters, settings, time and place into a serial narrative. Comic book events like this are even more anticipated by fans than the movies spawned by the books! This particular event, culminating in the death of Captain America, began in February of 2006, preceded by a year's pre-planning by the Marvel editing team, and was followed by another orchestrated event titled "Civil War; The Initiative." This planning does not lessen the *charivari* nature of the event because *charivaris* do require planning, gathering of the protesters, building effigies, and choosing the appropriate insults and punishment for the wrong-doers. As such, a *charivari* requires local and oral communication, and a strong knowledge of local culture and expectations passed on usually by an oral tradition. Graphic novel or comic book culture is likewise literate in the same ways that an oral tradition has its own literacy. It relies on images, dialogue and the intersection between the two, as well as a knowledge of the past experiences and biographies of the characters, and so it reflects more of the aspects of oral and visual culture, and less that of literary culture.

On the most basic level, we associate comics with humor, and that is usually where the *fabliaux* connection occurs. Graphic novels or superhero comics, however, are not always humorous, although they do attempt to entertain and educate, in that a reader should learn from the characters' mistakes. D.S. Brewer's oft-quoted definition of a *fabliau* is

> A versified short story designed to make you laugh, and its subject matter is most often indecent, concerned either with sexual or excretory functions. The plot is usually in the form of a practical joke carried out for love or revenge. (247)

In the face of authority, it is irreverent, and the heroes and heroines are usually young and are

> those who society scorns – dispossessed intellectuals... clever peasants, and enthusiastically unchaste wives. Their victims are usually those whom society respects – prosperous merchants, hard-working tradesmen, and women foolish enough to try to remain chaste. (Riverside Chaucer 8)

In French *fabliaux* tales, which are very unreal and thus linked to romance as a genre, we are instructed to learn from the errors of the characters, but there are not many effects in terms of consequences for their actions. Chaucer's tales (and an example of one that is both a *charivari* and a *fabliau* is the *Merchant's Tale*, where January marries young Lady May) "deal more consciously with social pressures... and are of a more public nature" (MacArthy). In Chaucer's tales, however, we are often cruelly encouraged to identify and sympathize with the character that is sometimes most harshly treated. In his tales, we find ourselves worrying about what will happen when the tale is over, which are not what French *fabliaux* normally encourage. His treatment of *fabliaux* helps us see the appeal of Marvel's particular universe to comic book fans, in that there is not only a political depth to the stories, but also the characters themselves are those who society scorns, such as mutants, like Wolverine, or humans who gain accidental powers, like Spiderman.

"wherefore that men pleyne ..."

While *fabliaux* work as a theoretical nexus for most comics, this particular "Civil War" situation with Captain America is an exception; the entire epic is not meant to be gently humorous, but sharply satirical, that is, the *charivari* remains the specific form of protest, but the intention is not that of offering a moral education, but instead, via a literary *complaint*, to reveal a minority culture's suffering by channeling their anger into satire instead of violence. As such, the *fabliau* aspect is edged out by the *complaint*, a genre also found liberally among Chaucer's works.[2]

Lee Patterson frames *complaint* in comparison to poetry: poetry is "language [that is] a form of action that mediates between the subject and the world" and *complaint* "interrogates its relation to these two presences, [asking] can language objectify the subject and/or have an effect upon the world?" (56). He admits that complaint, like poetry, is generally ineffective, resulting in

> an illegitimate attempt to change a world that will yield only to action... the poet's relation to the world is thus one of exclusion, of alienation: rather than participating, he stands to one side, claiming the privilege of irony because he lacks the efficiency of power. (57)

Complaint may be generally ineffective, but is not entirely ineffective, because it can, however, be an important mode of expression that impacts the entire arena of literature. It can

> stage questions central to literary culture as a whole... [and in it] radical speculation can be granted free play. And since the issues generated by the reflexivity of complaint focus upon the ground of writing, the form can be used to raise even larger questions about the foundations of cultural and metaphysical truths. (57)

On a more modest level, complaints help a writer confront a current moral dilemma, and Marvel Comics are not being shy about asking these larger questions. Captain America becomes a complex protagonist: he is a member of the *charivari* who are trying to put the Marvel Universe back in order. He is also a part of Chaucer's particular type of *fabliaux* because we care about what happens to him, for in the Marvel Universe he is a scorned hero as well as the victim whom society respects. Finally, he is the voice of Marvel's *complaint* against our present political system. Captain America: humble, chaste and self-sacrificing, dies, killed as a "villain" by a sniper's bullet, while Tony Stark (an alcoholic, misogynistic, arms and tech-merchant playboy billionaire known as *Iron Man*, with an eponymous Marvel series of his own since 1968), is the dubious "hero" whose side wins the Civil War.[3]

Captain America's views become the voice of the sufferer, and just as *complaint* as a genre is combined in a narrative or is part of longer works, the narrative of this "Civil War" is part of a larger framework of 60+ years of Marvel Comics' voice, and their expression of the human condition. Marvel Editor-In-Chief Joe Quesada explained in the press conference following Cap's death that the Marvel "Civil War" is a story about "something that is near and dear to all of us Americans... really, [to] all of us around the world, which is the idea of civil liberties versus personal freedom" (Golodryga). Marvel's choice to make their superhero world politically relevant encourages readers to explore the choices that an individual

makes; love, war, justice, injustice, loyalty and betrayal are shown in such a way that requires the reader to enter into the sufferer's point of view and consider moral judgment. A *complaint* must always be justified:

> The ordre of compleynt requireth skylfully
> That yf a wight shal pleyne pitously,
> Ther mot be cause wherefore that men pleyne.
> (The Complaint of Mars, 155-7)

For most Marvel readers the *complaint* is acceptably justified, but perhaps because it is the nature of the readership within that particular culture to see themselves as outsiders, minorities, and individuals, and therefore comfortable with the necessity for social protest against inequality and the violation of civil liberties. Bakhtin saw popular culture as a social expression that replicates and renews itself beneath the strictures of the ruling order. Comics, then, to use Bakhtin's definition, appropriate the discourse of popular culture, and in turn, create popular culture through the same mediation, the same way Chaucer did by fusing popular and elite levels of culture. Neely Tucker, a writer for the Washington Post, wrote in his editorial on March 8, 2007 about myths, fables and popular culture:

> Comics are essentially fables and myths, and the best ones are simple stories that explain something complicated about ourselves. [Since the 1940's] comics... got edgier, meaner, grimmer. Violence became more realistic, with more consequences. Superman died, Batman broke his back, Spider-Man took off his mask. The good guys were flawed. And so was Captain America, much like his country. He started out a true-blue patriotic icon, but in recent years grew more complex. He had gone from always fighting for the government to sometimes fighting against it. Dear Steve Rogers and the mythical mid-century America – its front porches, decency and good manners – are dead. Captain America will come back, but who he is, what he represents, and how he reflects American society, that's uncertain. There's a five-edition series [under his title] coming up, with superheroes dealing with the stages of grief. It'll be a while before any new Captain America makes an appearance. Who he will be by then, and who we will be, is an open question. We change in these little ways, in our myths and fables, and bit by bit we wake up to see a different nation, and different heroes, looking back out of the mirror. (1)

Unlike the death of DC's Superman in the early 1990's, the assassination of an archetypal icon like Captain America may prove to be the voice of a *charivari* protest for millions of comic book readers and movie viewers that will expand beyond what outsiders think of as escapist fantasy, and instead affect both popular and political culture.[4] Indeed, the morning after Independence Day in 2007, news agencies *USA Today*, ABC News, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* and others

reported on Captain America's funeral, as did The Epoch Times in Ireland, and Yahoo! India. I began by asking, "Who cares?" It appears millions do care, and that the politically astute *complaint* of this minority comic book culture is a *charivari* heard around the world.

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[1] This study is part of a larger exploration of the connections between medieval visual theory and modern visual theory. I am indebted to Michael S. Nagy of South Dakota State University for his lucid suggestion that I explore the complaint genre in Chaucer in addition to the fabliaux genre.

[2] Lee Patterson suggests "we should remember that [Chaucer] maintained a persistent, intense interest in the kind of writing he and his contemporaries called complaint" (55). In defining the complaint, W. A. Davenport summarizes John Peters as "distinguish[ing] four types: complaints of corruption of classes of men (clerks, lawyers, etc.); complaints of particular vides and types (women, misers, etc.); complaints of specific abuses (dress, cosmetics); and complaints on general themes such as providence, virtue and vice, the contrast between present misery and the past, and the idea of man's inner condition as the microcosmic expression of the state of the world" (4). Complaint is, of course, `connected with the idea of the Classical Golden Age, Paradise before the Fall, and the uncertainties of Fortune, which echo classical elegies.

[3] Tony Stark/*Iron Man's* own movie is currently in production, directed by Jon Favreau and starring Robert Downey Jr. The film is scheduled for a release date of 2 May 2008. See: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0371746/ .

[4] The Montclair Art Museum opened an exhibition on 14 July 2007 titled "Reflecting Culture: The Evolution of American Comic Book Superheroes," beginning with the birth of Superman in June 1938 and ending with the death of Captain America in March 2007. In *The New York Times* interview announcing the exhibition, Michael E. Uslan, a film producer ("Batman Begins," among others) remarked on the nature of comic book culture: "Since I was a kid, I've been fighting to get comic books recognized as a legitimate American art form, as indigenous as Jazz. After all these years, that recognition is finally happening" (Gustines 1). The exhibition focuses on how comics mirror social history and reflect political realities, and asks at the end "What kind of role should superheroes play now?"

Dr. Vince Redder

From Penshurst to Paradise, or: How Adam Became a Landowner

In their respective ways, both Ben Jonson and John Milton were outcasts: Jonson had converted to Catholicism in 1598 and had problems fitting in with the new regime of James I; in 1605, in fact, he ended up briefly in prison for ridiculing the king in his play *Eastward, Ho*! By the time Milton wrote *Paradise Lost*, the Puritan regime was out of power, he had narrowly escaped execution after the Restoration, and he was blind. Both poets saw in contemporary society developments they did not like, from a negative change in government to increased ostentation in architecture. It is fortunate for succeeding generations that they felt this way, because it is out of these feelings that some of their greatest work was written.

Many critics maintain that country house poetry, which flourished in English between 1612 and 1651, was a vehicle, partly, for the poets to look nostalgically backward into a past when life was simpler and better, and to mourn the loss of that life. I will suggest here that perhaps John Milton used the concepts embodied in that type of poetry in his poem Paradise Lost. It seems to me that Milton fashions of Adam a type of landowner who, like the best of the lord praised in country house poetry, possesses the hallmarks of hospitality and largesse. Moreover, his "house" is not Italianate and pretentious, and the Garden of Eden, bounded by walls, is abundant and provides for his every need. All of the virtues praised by Ben Jonson in *To Penshurst*, and applied by Milton to Adam, would have been attractive to both poets: perhaps living as he did in a post-restoration world known for its excesses, Milton, like Jonson writing earlier, could appreciate an earlier and simpler time when man was closer to God.

Neither Ben Jonson nor John Milton invented country house poetry: Roman poets like Statius and Cicero, Martial, Virgil, and Horace speak lovingly of their "villae rusticae" away from the press of Rome and its attendant duties to the city and its emperor. Horace, for instance, gushes famously in his *Odes* 2.18 about his Sabine farm:

> Non ebur neque aureum
> Mea renidet in domo lacunar,
> non trabes Hymettiae
> premunt columnas ultima recisas
> Africa, neque Attali
> Ignotus heres regiam occupavi,
> nec Laconicas mihi
> trahunt honestae purpuras clientae. (1-10)[1]

Horace praises his farm for what it is not—proud and pretentious—and, by so doing, builds eventually a positive picture of what life on the land closer to nature is like. So it is with English country house poetry of the seventeenth century.

G.R. Hibbard outlines the tradition of country house poetry in an article in 1956; he identifies the English variety as beginning with Ben Jonson's *To Penshurst* and substantially ending with Andrew Marvell's *Appleton House*. According to Hibbard, Jonson wrote *Penshurst* as a reaction to changing times in which appearances were more important than relationships (159). In his poem, Jonson praises the Sidney family (the owners of the Penshurst estate) for holding on to the older, more traditional values of family and conviviality; he, like Horace, praises the Sidney estate for what it is not:

> Thou are not, PENSHVRST, built to envious show
> Of touch, or marble ; nor canst boast a row
> Of polish'd pillars, or a roofe of gold:
> Thou hast no lantherne whereof tales are told ;
> Or stayre, or courts. (1-5)

As an example of the virtue of the family, Jonson holds up their old, comfortable house, which is not a "proud, ambitious heap" (101) built to the specifications of an architect, but an "ancient pile," abundant in the "better marks, of soyle, of ayre, / of wood," and "water" (7-8). The Sidney home, for Jonson, is emblematic of the four elements which make up life on earth. It is built of the essential matter of life, not superfluous and costly columns and pillars; for this reason, it deserves respect (Cubeta 15). Don Wayne has remarked in his book *Penshurst: the Semiotics of Place and the Poetics of History*, that "the Sidneys have lent to the hall their virtue which is natural, innate, and timeless, and which bestows upon the house the power to transform Nature into paradise" (108). In the poet's mind, however, not all houses deserved as much respect as the Sidneys' estate.

In the seventeenth century, there was a change in the way owners of country homes viewed their property (Hibbard 161). Before capitalism, property was a right received from the monarch that provided a living for the lord in return for services to the king. Therefore, as everything belonged to the king, everything could one day again revert to him. Servants and laborers were looked upon as family, and all dined together in the "great hall" with the lord. Later, however, property became the "thing itself," as Don Wayne says (23). When property became "private," the lord could liquidate it and buy a house in London, or decorate it to demonstrate his powerful position in the social circles of the city. When this became the trend at the turn of the seventeenth century, the old ways

of "familial" leadership of the lord gradually disappeared. Landlords frequently absented themselves from their "rural seats" to live in the city, and eventually they began to treat their tenants in the same way as their houses—as property owned by them and at their disposal to be sold or liquidated as for cash (McClung 20). It is this treatment that Jonson decries; he sees a connection between "proud, ambitious heaps" and their "proud, ambitious" owners.

An owner of the type Jonson dislikes would have had a house which, according to Hibbard, had a court used for entertaining court officials instead of a great hall, used as a dining room for the family and servants (161). As decoration in seventeenth century great houses increased, "housekeeping," which embodied the liberality and generosity of the owners to visitors, decreased. The "new men" of the Tudor and Stuart nobility, realizing a tie between their fortunes and the court, built houses that not only flaunted their money, but were also designed to entertain and flatter their friends from London. The first few lines of *To Penshurst* are in fact based on an actual residence: the famous estate at Theobalds had a belfry lantern and a chiming clock with dials showing the signs of the zodiac and the planets (Fowler 268).

Puritans were famously repulsed by ostentation: they objected to anything that even smacked of superfluous decoration. Thus the Admonition Controversy in 1572 began over an argument as to whether the Anglican clergy should be forced to wear a surplice. Of course, the Puritans saw the Roman Church behind religious ostentation, but they also protested against excesses in matters of individual dress: Phillip Stubbes, writing in 1583, referred to hat feathers as "sternes of pride and ensigns of vanitie," and "fluttering sayles and fethered flags of defiance to vertue (Stubbes). Puritans were also famously fond of referring to the starch used to extend ruffs beyond the shoulders as "demon starch." According to the pseudonymous Martin Mar-Prelate, writing in *The Description of a Puritan*, "A Puritan is he, that cannot fare, / to deck his round Head with a Bonnet square" and "Whose Hair, and Ruffs, dare not his Ears exceed: / that on high Saint's days wears his working Weed. / That Crosses each doth hate, save on his pence, / and loathes the public Rope of Penitence" (Sasek 118).

Jonson begins *To Penshurst* with a negative example of ostentation; a reader looking for this display in *Paradise Lost* must descend to hell, where he is rewarded with a glimpse of Pandemonium, built according to the latest Italianate architectural designs:

> *Pilasters* round
> Were set, and Doric Pillars overlaid
> With Golden Architrave; nor did there want
> Cornice or Frieze, with bossy Sculptures grav'n;
> The Roof was fretted Gold. Not *Babylon*,
> Nor great *Alcairo* such magnificence
> Equall'd in all thir glories, to inshrine
> *Belus* or *Serapis* thir Gods, or seat
> Thir Kings, when *Egypt* with *Assyria* strove
> In wealth and luxury. Th'ascending pile
> Stood fixt her stately highth, and straight the doors
> Op'ning thir brazen folds discover wide
> Within, her ample spaces, o'er the smooth
> And level pavement; from the arched roof,
> Pendant by subtle Magic many a row
> Of Starry Lamps and blazing Cresssets fed
> With *Naphtha* and *Asphaltus* yielded light
> As from a sky. (I, 713-30)

Thus is Pandemonium raised by the demons, whose chief sin is pride itself. It is not difficult to see in the demonic palace a description of all that Jonson abhors. Both Pandemonium and Jonson's example sport a roof of gold, a row of pillars, and famous lanterns (hung by magic in hell. The courts we find at the beginning of *To Penshurst* show up in hell as "ample spaces" and "level pavement." All of this superfluous ornamentation springs directly from the mind of an architect: Hibbard reports that "[t]he decisive change which ultimately altered the whole style and character of the large country house came with the rise of the professional architect" (160). For Jonson, these architects are the downfall of the older English familial system of government, while Milton is more damning in his judgment: immediately after surveying their new surroundings, the fallen angels praise the architect (732), who is in hell right beside them.

Neither Jonson nor Milton mean merely to "demonize" contemporary architects, but to point out by contrast the positive effects of a well-maintained rural country home. The advantages of such an estate are not, as Jonson tells us, in the elaborate architecture of the house, but its "better marks": the abundance given to the land by God himself in the elements of "soyle, of ayre, / Of wood, of water" (7-8). The poet roams the Sidney land, observing its chief natural resources, which Carole Newlands has described as "abundance and order" (296). A reader cannot fail to notice the harmony between the lord and his land: all the plants and animals put themselves at the lord's disposal, fish even jumping into nets and pheasants willingly coming to the chopping block to become food for the master's table. In this idyllic world, there is an

interdependence between man and nature, each taking care of the other; the various animals at Penshurst realize their highest good in contribution to this perfect balance. As the house itself participates in the sobriety and virtue of the owners, so does the land benefit: an Eden is created in which there is no enmity between man and nature. The lord tends the land and the land responds by providing him with all that he needs to feed himself, his family, and all his tenants. This harmony follows Roman country house literature, where the stoic virtues of the owners—simplicity, independence, and magnanimity—infect the land with their own virtues (Gill 229). Although the ancient authors probably influenced both Jonson and Milton, the latter firmly apply the concept of virtue to their own subjects.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton evokes the country house theme, describing the Garden of Eden as "A happy rural seat of various view" (IV, 247); just as it does on the Sidney's estate, so in the Eden of Paradise Lost, the land similarly gives of its bounty to support its lord: Milton explains that "after no more toil / Of thir sweet Gard'ning labor than suffic'd / To recommend cool *Zephyr*," Adam and Eve are able to eat their supper, "Nectarine Fruits which the compliant boughs / Yielded them (IV, 239-9, 332-3). William McClung comments that "in the system of the golden world, nature serves man with the necessities and even the luxuries he requires" (12). This is certainly the case on Adam's estate and at Penshurst as well.

Both "houses" described by Milton and Jonson are simple and unadorned: Penshurst is an "ancient pile," while Milton creates for Adam and Eve a "blissful Bower" with no gold, but flowers and vines for a roof and walls (IV, 702); architects are notably absent in Adam's "place / Chos'n by the Sovran Planter, when he fram'd / All things to man's delightful use" (IV, 691-2). Milton's description of Adam and Eve's house echoes Jonson's description of Penshurst in spirit, and his description of Pandemonium certainly echoes Jonson's rendition of new houses built in the seventeenth century, known to both poets.

In addition to a simple house, the garden estate participates in the same harmony of man and nature found on the Sidney's property. In the time-honored depiction of the pre-lapsarian earth, lions and kids play together, and bears, tigers, lynes and elephants do tricks before Adam and Eve to entertain them (IV, 343-6). Although there is work to be done in the garden (Milton and Adam Jonson believed firmly in the Protestant work ethic), it is pleasant and not difficult; the "tending" of the garden by pruning back branches shows Adam's care of the land with which he is entrusted by God.

In the same way that the Sidneys of Penshurst are given their estate by the queen and confirmed in the gift by James I, so Adam recognizes that he is the lord of

Eden by God's gift: he speaks to Eve of "so many signs of power and rule / Conferr'd upon us, and Dominion giv'n / Over all other Creatures that possess / Earth, Air, and Sea" (IV, 429-32).

The Sidney land, like the house, is a metonym for the owners (Molesworth 145) and reflects their goodness. In the same way, the Garden of Eden reflects the goodness of Adam and Eve. When Eve eats the forbidden fruit in book IX, "Earth [feels] the wound, and Nature from her seat / Sighing through all her Works [gives] signs of woe, / That all was lost" 9782-4). Later, when Adam succumbs to temptation, "Earth [trembles] from her entrails, as again / In pangs, and Nature [gives] a second groan" (IX, 1000-01). Adam similarly makes a speech to Eve after her fall in which he implies that, when they fall, their domain falls with them; this demonstrates a connection between land and owners that is even closer than that shown by Jonson.

One critic has remarked that the harmony of Penshurst is based on giving (Newlands 296), and one of the virtues Jonson praises the Sidneys for is hospitality, one which he sees lacking in larger and newer houses. Jonson lauds the Sidneys for providing an open board for eating and spacious rooms with good service for sleeping. He says that, at Penshurst, the "liberall boord doth flow / With all that hospitalitie doth know! / Where comes no guest but is allow'd to eate, / Without his feare, and of thy lord's owne meate" 959-62). The poet praises Lord Sidney for a spirit of equality that reigns at his table, where master and guest dine together on the same food. "Here," he says, "no man tells my cups; nor standing by, / A waiter, doth m gluttony enuy: / But giues me what I call, and lets me eate" (67-9). The hospitality extends from the table to the room, as Jonson says "Nor, when I take my lodging, need I pray / For fire, or lights, or liuorie; all is there; / As if thou, then, wert mine, or I raign'd here" (72-4). The harmony displayed on the grounds of the estate is truly a reflection of the moral rectitude of the owners. The liberal board spread before guests at Penshurst is, as Harold Toliver has observd, not mere display of wealth, but "the material side of conviviality" (116).

This same hospitality and liberality is evident as well to Adam and Eve's archangelic guest. When Raphael descends to paradise on his mission to warn the pair of Satan's plan to tempt them, he is received with the same respect and courtesy that Jonson receives at Penshurst; Adam understands that he is returning what he has himself received: "well we may afford / Our givers thir own gifts, and large bestow / From large bestow'd" (V, 316-17). This according to Milton and Jonson, is the proper attitude concerning al the bounty of nature, and the reason why it is expected to be shared and not hoarded. Eve rises to the task of entertainment:

> With dispatchful looks in haste
> She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent
> What choice to choose for delicacy best,
> What order, so contriv'd as not to mix
> Tastes, not well join'd, inelegant, but bring
> Taste after taste upheld with kindliest change. (V, 331-6)

After gathering the food for the angelic guest, Eve "gathers, Tribute large, and on the board / heaps with unsparing hand" (V, 343-4). There is a definite parallel between Lord Sidney's largesse at Penshurst and Adam's in paradise. Adam, like Sidney, possesses "by sovran gift...this spacious ground" (V, 366-7), but makes that gift and all in it welcome to his guest. Jonson and Raphael repay their host by "falling to" the food placed before them. In paradise Eve ministers to them naked at the table by refilling their cups "with pleasant liquors" (V, 445).

In a well-maintained household, the hostess is the center of hospitality, and Jonson praises Lady Sidney for her extraordinary housekeeping skills: on the occasion of an unexpected visit to Penshurst by King James and his son, Jonson notes, Lady Sidney was praised for her readiness: "And what praise was heap'd / On thy good lady, then! Who, therein, reap'd / The iust reward of her high huswifery" (83-5). She is later praised by the poet not only for her "high huswifery," but for being fruitful and chaste, appellation which could equally apply to Eve. Just as Lady Sidney was the mother of many children (Wayne 71), Eve is the "mother of all the living." Both husbands and landowners have fruitful and chaste wives through whom their virtue is channeled to visitors and family.

In the imperfect universes of Jonson and Milton, where money and power were becoming more important than family and hospitality, each poet serves his readers an example of a landowner who yet realizes the source of his goodness and responds with beneficence. The similarities between the two poems in this respect are truly striking; each landowner is manager of land given by a higher authority; both exhibit a virtue which manifests itself in the harmony on the grounds of the estate; both are praised for their unreserved hospitality to visitors, and both are visited by important guests; both have simple dwellings which are devoid of ostentation; the dwellings of both are contrasted to other, more sumptuous houses built by proud and ambitious men; and finally, both are praised for their chaste and fruitful wives.

As the stories continue, Adam loses paradise for breaking his agreement with his sovereign, violating God's injunction not to eat of the tree in the middle of the garden. According to English law, as Milton and Jonson both knew, Adam's

estates were "attainted"; he lost his title and he and his heirs were barred from their former possessions. While the loss of Penshurst would affect only the Sidneys, the loss of paradise affects all of mankind, who are Adam's heirs. Fifty years after Jonson, then, Milton finishes what Jonson begins, giving it a religious significance important in his time and extending it beyond its earthly limits. Paul Cubeta has remarked that Jonson's metaphorical structure extends to the "highest earthly limits" (23), and Harold Toliver notes that Milton "is an important landmark in extending the household image especially in moving outdoors to its natural-supernatural grounds and to his origins in Eden" (122). Jonson teaches us what liberality and largesse are; Milton cautions us as to the eternal effects of not attending to the highest sovereign.

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Notes

[1] "Not ivory or gilded panel gleams in my home, nor do beams of Hymettian marble rest on pillars quarried in farthest Africa, nor have I, as heir of Attalus, become unwittingly the owner of a palace, nor for me do high-born dames trail robes of Laconian purple." (Horace, *Odes* 2.18, lines 1-10)

Dr. Douglas W. Hayes

The Language of Love: Rhetoric and Sexual Identity in *Philotus*

The anonymous late Middle Scots play *Philotus* stands as a prime example of the *commedia erudita* as it was practiced in mid-sixteenth-century Scotland. The revival of Plautus and Terence in the schools and the pervasive influence of Italian art and culture explain the interest in this dramatic and rhetorical mode, but the content of the play steers the old man Philotus' rhetoric toward subversion in his reinscription of Philerno, brother of Philotus' beloved Emilie, as a woman in man's clothing. Moving beyond farce in its implications, *Philotus* uses the *commedia erudita* to underscore the extent to which rhetoric in this late Middle Scots play not only describes gender and sexual identity but also serves to shape those concepts for the play's audience. R. D. S. Jack summarizes the plot in the preface to his anthologized edition of the play:

> Philotus, a rich old man, woos young Emilie using a bawd ('macrell'). The girl's father, Alberto, agrees to the arrangement. Meanwhile Emilie elopes with Flavius and Philerno, her brother, returns from abroad. Her father and Philotus are told that Emilie is now dressed as a man and so, on meeting Philerno, think he is his sister. He humours them [...] and so is put under the guardianship of Philotus' daughter, Briscilla. He falls in love with her and enacts a miraculous 'transformation' to masculinity, attributing it to the gods' pity for him. For Philotus he maintains his female role and undergoes a form of marriage with the old man. Then he threatens his 'husband' physically and sends him to bed with a whore. Flavius, after naively witnessing the marriage, believes Emilie is a sorceress, proclaims a comic exorcism and expels her from his house. In the end, all is explained and the two young couples marry, leaving Philotus to bewail his fate and warn other ancient lovers against following his example. (Jack 390; all subsequent references will be to this edition and will be quoted by line numbers.)

James Craigie, in his article "*Philotus*: A Late Middle Scots Comedy," summarizes the history of this play, notable for constituting, along with Sir David Lyndsay's *Satire of the Thrie Estatis*, the whole of extant Middle Scots drama (Craigie 19):

> Sometime in the year 1603, and apparently as early even as the month of January, The Edinburgh printer, Robert Charteris, published in a black-letter quarto of fourty-four pages a work in 171 stanzas, which described itself on its title-page as 'Ane verie excellent and delectabill Treatise intitulit PHILOTVS.' That it was popular seems to be proved by the fact that a

> second edition was issued from the printing house of Andro Hart in 1612, Hart having in the interval succeeded to the printing business of Charteris. Copies of these two seventeenth century editions are today very scarce. (19)

Craigie's article and a brief discussion in Sarah Carpenter's "Early Scottish Drama" in *The History of Scottish Literature Volume I: Origins to 1660*, edited by R. D. S. Jack comprise the only widely available published work on this play. Given its importance to Scottish literature in general and to Scotland's dramatic history in particular, it is surprising that more work has not been done on this play up to now. Its European roots in the Italian genre of *commedia erudita* are perhaps the best place to begin an examination of this playtext.

The *commedia erudita*, along with the somewhat later *commedia dell' arte*, served as sixteenth-century Italy's premiere vernacular contribution to Renaissance drama. Beginning with Ariosto's *La Cassaria* in 1508, these plays brought the techniques and character types of the Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence into a modern vernacular setting for a generally well-born audience ("Comedy"). Deploying a standard structure of exposition (*protasis*), complication (*epitasis*), and resolution (*catastrophe*) (Jack 403 n.28), and observing the unities of time, place, and action, these plays offer a structural uniformity that belies their content. Rhetorical facility, particularly the high style, also features prominently in this genre, in contrast with the relatively unscripted and more physical *commedia dell' arte* ("commedia dell' arte"). That said, critics have been quick to point out that in spite of the display of rhetorical virtuosity and high style in the *commedia erudita*, the genre lacks a moral or didactic purpose. The Victorian poet and literary critic John Addington Symonds writes in his *Renaissance in Italy*:

> Society was in dissolution, and men lived for the moment, careless of consequences. The immorality of the theatre was at once a sign and a source of this corruption [...] It must not be supposed that the immorality of the comic stage consists in the license of language, incident, or plot [...] It lies far deeper, in the vicious philosophy of life paraded by authors in the absence of any didactic or satirical aim. (Symonds 276, qtd. in Ukas 204 n.1)

Of course, this view of the *commedia erudita* is focused through the lens of Victorian moral prescription. Writing in 1911, Winifred Smith's article on the often overlooked influence of the Italian academies upon the Italian popular stage of the Renaissance reminds us that "[w]e incline to call these plays more farcical than they were meant to be, and to overlook their basal themes, because the values discussed seem to us merely artificial and abstract; but that these themes furnished a real 'problem' element to their first audiences is perfectly

evident from the academic debates" (Smith 562). Of course, Smith's is the more balanced perspective on the *commedia erudita*, but Symonds's view bears upon this analysis because it underscores the extent to which the genre links sexuality with rhetoric. This link will prove useful as a way to understand the Scottish reinscription of this Italian drama.

The action of the play under consideration here begins with Philotus being informed by Stephano that Emilie "mannis clathis hes on her tane" (l. 646). Philotus' resulting rant inscribes femininity in purely misogynistic terms:

> O sex uncertaine, frayle and fals,
> Dissimulate and dissaitful als,
> With honie lips to hald in hals,
> But with an wickit mynde;
> Quhome will dois mair nor reasoun mufe,
> Mair lecherie nor honest lufe,
> Mair harlotrie nor gude beufe–
> Unconstant and unkynde! (ll. 681-88)

This is the rhetoric of the anti-feminist tradition, with a history stretching back at least as far as the *Adversus Jovinianum* (circa 393 CE) of St. Jerome and well attested in vernacular works well-known in Scotland such as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. It is meant to be comic and a commonplace, but it also serves to delineate the boundaries within which femininity is placed in the world both in and outside the play, vacillating as it does between both sides of the virgin/whore dichotomy as described by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their pioneering 1979 feminist study *The Madwoman in the Attic*.

Philotus' reaction upon apprehending Philerno, Alberto's estranged son and Emilie's brother, who stops to ask "In quhat streit dois Alberto dwell [...]/For thocht I be his sone and heyre,/I knaw him not a myte the mair (ll. 698-702), is the flipside of the "hure" (l. 665) dichotomy set up when Emilie's crossdressing was first announced. Philotus pleads:

> Rage not gude gosse, bot hold your toung.
> The las bot bairnlie is and young,
> I wald be laith to wit her dung,
> Suppose scho hath offendit:
> Forgive hir this ane fault for mee,
> And I sall souertie for hir bee,
> That instantly sho sall agree,
> That this slip sould be mendit. (ll. 713-20)

Promising to take Philerno/ Emilie home with him where he will keep him/her "saif fra schame" (l. 758), Philotus uses his rhetorical powers to reinscribe Emilie as a virgin in need of protection, and both sides of the dichotomy are in place in the same confused and ironically male character.

The irony and stupidity of Philotus' blind dichotomizing is given voice by Plesant, the jester Vice figure who remains onstage during the course of the entire play. His direct address to the audience, in keeping with the Vice figure tradition, is both entertaining in its rhetorical efforts to co-opt the audience and remarkable for its effective departure from the high style that permeates this play:

> Quha ever saw in all thair lyfe,
> Twa cappit cairlis mak sik ane stryfe?
> To tak a young man for his wyfe,
> Yon cadgell wald be glaid!
> The feind resave the, feckles frunt–
> Put doun thy hand and graip hir cunt–
> The carle kennis not, he is sa blunt,
> Gif scho be man or maid! (ll. 761-68)

The blunt diction and low style lead the audience into the realm of common sense. This is an important tension because of Plesant's position and social status in the play. On the one hand, identifying with Plesant's reasoning is logical; on the other had, both the actions he suggests and the rhetorical techniques he uses to suggest them are vulgar and should at least invite resistance from a well-born audience that does not wish to be seen to hear or identify with such language. Thus, the tension between gender as a fact of biology and gender as a rhetorical construct is maintained via class hierarchy as expressed through rhetorical style.

The rhetoric Philerno deploys when apprehended by Alberta and Philotus is also stereotypically gendered and serves to reinscribe him in feminine terms. He answers Alberto's charge of disobedience:

> Father, I grant my haill offence,
> Thir claithes I have tane till ga hence,
> And gif it please yow til dispence,
> With thir things that ar past:
> Thir bygane faultes will ye forgive,
> And efter, father, quhill I live,
> Agane I sall yow never greive
> Quhill that my lyfe may last. (ll. 721-28)

The stereotypically feminine submission of this elaborate apology is so rhetorically effective that even Philerno himself will, just a few lines later in the play, tell Philotus that he/she will "follow baith at bed and meit,/Quhill that I be ane bryde" (ll. 791-92). Of course, the primary purpose of such an answer is to highlight the farce that is at the centre of the genre of *commedia erudita*, but that fact does not lessen the impact of Philerno's rhetoric for an audience that is at this point increasingly–ironically–encouraged to see gender as constructed in rhetorical terms.

The climactic moment for the rhetorical construction of gender in the play occurs not when Philerno marries Philotus but, rather, at an earlier point in the play, when, presumably in love with Brisilla, Philotus' daughter, he 'prays' to the gods to turn him into a man so, as young women being forced to marry old husbands, they can marry each other and thereby avoid their fates:

> Quhy may not now, als weill as than,
> The goddes convert me in ane man?
> The lyke, gif that my prayer can,
> I surelie will assay:
> Maist secreit goddes celestiall,
> Ye michtie muifers greit and small,
> And heavenlie powers, ane and all,
> Maist humblie I yow pray:
>
> Luke doun from your impyre abone,
> And, from your heich, triumphant trone,
> Till us puir saullis send succour sone
> Of your maist speciall grace.
> Behald how wee puir madynis murne,
> For feir and luif how baith wee burne,
> Thairfor, intill ane man mee turne,
> For till eschew this cace. (ll. 857-72)

Of course, Philerno/Emilie's prayer is heard and he 'magically' becomes a man. He "rander[s] thanks" (l. 901) to all the gods, exclaims "I am ane man Brisilla, lo!/ And with all necessaris thairto/May all that onie man may do" (ll. 905-07), and, less than twenty lines later, responds to Philotus' urging that s/he go to the 'kirk' to get married with "Ga quhen ye list sir, I am readie" (l. 925). The audience thus witnesses sex and gender transformed via rhetoric and sees how the perception of sex and gender in noble society is dependant upon rhetoric to give it shape. In essence, the implications of this farce are that, for the well-born at least, biology and even clothing are less significant than rhetoric in

determining sex and gender roles. The humour of the play is entirely dependant upon this realization, and the affects of that realization linger after the audience's laughter has subsided.

The ending of the play, with Philotus lamenting his state and warning others against the potentially embarrassing results of May/December relationships, is the stuff of many medieval and Renaissance texts that confront this issue. Beyond the proverbial wisdom of the play's ending, however, lies the fact that sexual identity and gender are constructed rather than essential in this play. Moving past farce to consider the implications of such texts for the history of gender relations and our own twenty-first century perceptions of the roles of men and women, *Philotus* deserves a wider audience than it has attracted thus far.

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Dr. Adam H. Kitzes

" 'We Do But Lack Lord Cobham's Fellowship': *The Life of Sir John Oldcastle* and the Plot of Treason"

Shakespeare's *Henry V* was followed, in close succession, by *The First Part of the Life of Sir John Oldcastle*. The later play was written primarily by Anthony Munday and performed by the Admiral's men, and the performance ostensibly capitalized on the public interest in the troubles that had unfolded during King Henry's reign – in large part by staging events that Shakespeare's play had only alluded to, if not entirely danced around. More important, *Oldcastle* was sponsored by Henry Brooke (Lord Cobham), who had traced his lineage back to the title character, and who resented the Chamberlain's Men's unflattering portrait of his ancestor. The Admiral's Men's play was thus a deliberate attempt to clear Oldcastle's reputation, which Cobham assumed had been sullied by the character who only later came to be known as Falstaff. In the prologue, the playwrights introduce their title character as a response to Shakespeare's, drawing a sharp distinction between the two:

> It is no pampered glutton we present,
> Nor aged Councellor to youthful sin,
> But one whose virtue shone above the rest,
> A valiant martyr and a virtuous peer. (Prologue, 6-9)[1]

The play thus foregrounds Oldcastle's predilection for Wycliff and the Lollard doctrines; and while it does not go so far as to recall the King's own persecution of the Lollards, it makes clear that the Kingdom was filled with individuals set on making life unpleasant for the proto-Protestant sect. To that extent, the title character's sober and courageous conduct offers a clear riposte to the performances of the *Henry IV* plays, where (Oldcastle)Falstaff's antics virtually stole the show.

But *Oldcastle* also responds directly to *Henry V*, where Falstaff undergoes his offstage and quasi-tragic death. The point deserves emphasis because chief among the Admiral's Men's concerns was to clear Oldcastle of the charge that he had been a part of Lord Cambridge's conspiracy, which had been defeated at Southampton. In this respect, the Oldcastle play draws a sharp distinction from Shakespeare's for in *Henry V*, Shakespeare seems to go out of his way not to associate his character with the same conspiracy. Indeed, when compared to the attention that *Oldcastle* devotes to the Southampton conspiracy, Shakespeare appears not to have wanted much to do with the event at all. While he stages it, he reduces it to a momentary episode within the King's larger, and more brilliant

career – the arrest of the chief agents literally stands out from the rest of the dramatic action, so much so that any audience unfamiliar with the original historical events might not miss the scene's absence were it removed. Meanwhile, even as the King ostentatiously exposes the plotters, entrapping them almost as though he needed their betrayal in order to demonstrate his own sovereignty, Falstaff is left to himself at the tavern, perhaps suffering delusions as he calls out the name of God some three or four times. Thus, while the play introduces its title character as a corrective to the historical figure Shakespeare had ostensibly pilloried in his own plays, it proceeds in a surprising fashion by dwelling on the one topic that Shakespeare had shown comparatively less interest in addressing.[2]

Striking as it appears, it may be through its surprising shift in attention that *Oldcastle* is most deliberate in its response to the Henry plays. For in their examination of how the Southampton plot served to transform Oldcastle from loyal subject to protestant martyr, Munday and his co-authors raise questions about how the historical figure had become implicated in the conspiracy in the first place. As they contend, Oldcastle's association with the conspiracy turns out to have been nothing more than the effects of insinuating remarks, made by characters for whom Oldcastle's guilt would have well served more personal agendas. And by doing so, they challenge the one premise that Shakespeare appeared to have accepted as part of Henry's mythology, namely that the King had both the intellectual acumen and the political resources to make these distinctions on his own. In contrast to Shakespeare's history plays, *The Life of Sir John Oldcastle* is determined to show not only that its title character had been implicated in the treason plot despite his most concerted efforts to prove otherwise, but also that the very King to whom allegiance is in question proves incapable of protecting those subjects whose loyalty in fact never should have been in question.

In this respect, the play's involvement with contemporary political topics extended far beyond challenging King Henry's suitability for the militant Protestant culture which had been gaining momentum as England edged towards war with Spain. To be sure, the play would have interested Lord Cobham, whose more immediate relatives had been implicated in a number of plots – plots more noteworthy for their ineptitude than their motives or designs – and by clearing the name of his famous ancestor, the play would have reminded Cobham of the perils of guilt by false association. But while the play may have held some appeal for Cobham and his family, the playwrights' chief objectives were to raise crucial questions concerning the ease with which religious dissent can be conflated with political rebellion. To that end, the play effectively holds up the mirror to the Elizabethan government's persistent suspicions of Catholics as inherent threats to royal sovereignty.

As a dramatic re-enactment of the pre-history of the English Protestant Reformation, *Oldcastle* presents many aspects of late Elizabethan ecclesiastical policies in what might be thought of as their inverse form. From the start, Oldcastle is introduced as the natural leader of a popular Protestant uprising; though as the story quickly establishes, he is a leader in name only. To that end, the first three acts consist of introducing the extensive array of characters who find it in their respective, and often incongruous interests to associate Oldcastle's name with the threat of rebellion. These begin with the lord Powess and his followers, who introduce the play's action by starting a brawl in the streets of Hereford, which eventually spins so far out of control that the judges are forced to leave their benches to subdue it. As the judges survey the damage, they observe that Powess and Oldcastle share a mutual interest in Wycliff's doctrine, and it is this shared affinity that initiates the widespread suspicion that Oldcastle's religious beliefs will lead to further political turbulence:

> Gentlemen, Justices, master Mayor, and master Shrieve,
> It doth behoove us all, and each of us
> In general and particular, to have care
> For suppressing of all mutinies,
> And all assemblies, except soldiers' musters
> For the King's preparation into France.
> We hear of secret conventiclers made,
> And there is doubt of some conspiracies,
> Which may break out into rebellious arms
> When the King's gone, perchance before he go:
> Note as an instance, this one perilous fray;
> What factions might have grown on either part,
> To the destruction of the King and Realm. (scene 1, 101-13)

As news of the contentions spreads, several middle-class citizens from various walks of life find themselves drawn to Oldcastle's popularity, and they hitch their fortunes to their belief that the lord will lend significant manpower to an already popular uprising, an event which they further believe will naturally improve their own social standings. The play also introduces certain members of the peerage, who exploit fears of Oldcastle's dissident conduct, primarily to their own advantage.

Most prominent among the peerage is the Duke of Suffolk, an especially noteworthy figure. The Suffolk line had garnered some considerable notoriety during the early 1570s when the scandalous *Treatise of Treasons* – presumably written by John Leslie, Bishop of Rochester – implicated the family in a spectacularly elaborate plot against Queen Elizabeth. As that book had contended, the Queen faced threats from her own council, who plotted to keep

her childless in order that, upon her death, the royal line would be reverted to the House of Suffolk. At the very least, Suffolk's name would have been recognizable for its questionable involvement in more contemporary affairs, even if the two historical situations did not parallel each other exactly. Within the play, it is enough that the character operates as a sort of engine of gossip. Suffolk's literary flourishes go great lengths toward characterizing how the Oldcastle rumors develop of its own accord. Comparing the rumors to a fire, both of which require air and wind in order to spread, he advises the King:

> With pardon of your Highness, my dread lord,
> Such little sparks, neglected, may in time
> Grow to a mighty flame: but that's not all;
> He doth, beside, maintain a strange religion,
> And will not be compelled to come to mass. (scene 2, 105-09)

In fact, by the time the actual conspirators appear on stage in scene seven, their arguments already have lost much of their novelty. As the earls Cambridge, Scroop and Grey rehearse assumptions that Oldcastle's conflicts with the church will make him a natural ally to their faction, and that his popular support makes him a valuable resource, one may well wonder whether they are in fact merely internalizing rumors that had been coursing their way through the commonwealth for some time.

If Oldcastle is thought to belong to Cambridge's conspiracy, in a slightly different understanding of the term, he already does. During their first appearance on stage, Cambridge reviews his claims to the crown in a lengthy speech that seems to parody, in terms of complexity, Shakespeare's famous scene of justification for Henry's claim to the French crown. In a speech of about thirty-five lines, interrupted only briefly by Scroop, Cambridge outlines his case:

> Then thus, Lord Scroop, sir Thomas Gray, & you,
> Monsieur de Chartres, agent for the French:—
> This Lionel, Duke of Clarence, as I said,
> Third son of Edward (England's King) the third,
> Had issue Phillip, his sole daughter and heir;
> Which Phillip afterward was given in marriage
> To Edmund Mortimer, the Earl of March,
> And by him had a son called Roger Mortimer;
> Which Roger, likewise, had of his descent
> Edmund, Roger, Anne, and Eleanor—
> Two daughters and two sons—but those three
> Died without issue. Anne, that did survive,

> And now was left her father's only heir,
> My fortune was to marry, being too
> By my grandfather of Kind Edward's line:
> So of his sirname, I am called, you know,
> Richard Plantagenet. My father was
> Edward, the Duke of York, and son and heir
> To Edmund Langley, Edward the third's fifth son....
>
> True, for this Harry and his father both,
> Harry the first, as plainly doth appear,
> Are false intruders and usurp the Crown.
> For when young Richard was at Pomfret slain,
> In him the title of prince Edward died,
> That was the eldest of King Edward's sons:
> William, of Hatfield, and their second brother,
> Death in his nonage had before bereft:
> So that my wife, derived from Lionel,
> Third son unto King Edward, ought proceed,
> And take possession of the Diadem
> Before this Harry, or his father King,
> Who fetched their title but from Lancaster,
> Forth of that royal line. And being thus,
> What reason ist but she should have her right? (scene 7, 5-43)

Scroop's succinct reply of seven words, "I am resolved our enterprise is just," (44) has all the appearance of a resolution in advance; for all its appearance of meticulousness, Cambridge's rehearsal of his lineage has led Scroop to confirm exactly the position he had already determined himself to be. Paradoxically, it seems to take little more than Scroop to announce, "We lack but now Lord Cobham's fellowship, / And then their plot were absolute indeed," (66-7) for the conspirators to approach Oldcastle as though his fellowship were already promised.

Munday leaves little to the imagination when it comes to Oldcastle's response to the conspiracy. After the briefest of asides, which make plain to the audience his intentions,

> Notorious treason! yet I will conceal
> My secret thoughts, to sound the depth of it. (139-40)

He sounds out his would-be enticers in a frankly run-of-the-mill game of entrapment, before proceeding, more or less directly, to inform the King of his intelligence. If anything, he is surprisingly dispassionate; to the extent that he

registers any signs of turmoil, it is only insofar as his wife notices "disquiet" on his countenance, just as he readies himself to depart for the royal court with his news. Both Oldcastle's resolve to align himself with the King, and the King's subsequent arrest of the conspirators have a remarkable tidiness about them, but the point of the episode seems less to explore Oldcastle's innovative negotiations between religious dissent and political loyalty than to demonstrate the ways in which he remains implicated in the crisis despite all his efforts to disassociate himself. Indeed, as the play shows, Oldcastle's implication in the treason plot owed more to what other characters anticipated about him than to anything he himself had done.

But while Oldcastle is shown to be at the mercy of a popular belief which, at times, seems to unfold of its own accord, the King finds himself at the mercy of a corrupt church, whose leadership invokes the legal charge of treason against Protestant heretics as a diversion from its own criminal behavior. This corruption is represented most emphatically through the play's other Sir John, the Parson of Wrotham, whose overall character comes across as a more mean spirited version of Shakespeare's Falstaff. To that end, he keeps a courtesan named Doll, who poses as his wife when the two seek out lodging at roadside taverns. It is a toss-up as to whose tastes are more lascivious, but it becomes clear that Wrotham engages in highway robbery not only to satisfy his own spendthrift habits, but to stop his companion from running home to Kent. Wrotham's criminal activity reaches as far as the crown itself. At one of the play's turning points he catches King Henry alone and unarmed and takes his purse, only to be foiled later in a gambling scene that calls to mind the Williams episode from Shakespeare's staging of the battle at Agincourt. All of this is conducted with the spirit and bravado of the conventional stage villain. Thus, during one of the play's few soliloquies, he boasts to the audience:

> I am not as the world does take me for;
> If ever wolf were clothed in sheep's coat,
> Then I am he – old huddle and twang, yfaith,
> A priest in show, but in plain terms a thief.
> Yet, let me tell you too, an honest thief,
> One that will take it where it may be spared,
> And spend it freely in good fellowship. (scene 2, 154-60)

Later, as he robs the King, he makes predictable excuses for his own conduct by recalling the King's own past as follows: "Well, if the old King Henry had Liu'de, this King that is now had made thieving the best trade in England... Because he was the chief warden of our company" (scene 10, 84-6). Indeed, were it not for an Irishman charged with murder, who is introduced into the dramatic action during the final act, one would begin to suspect that the parson

himself were exclusively responsible for the criminal activity throughout the commonwealth. It turns out Shakespeare had been half right, correctly identifying the social dangers that beset Henry's Kingdom, though attributing them to the wrong source.

Although the Parson's conduct is not taken lightly, for the most part his character is played for comic effect. To that end, while he does pose a genuine threat to King – who, for his part, comes across as astonishingly vulnerable as he travels his own highways – that threat is defused as a temporary, and manageable situation, which the parson himself defines as a " proper pickle." By comparison, the play is at its most devastating in its portrayal of the Bishop of Rochester, whose unrestrained pursuit of Oldcastle during the final two acts, significantly, gains momentum only after the King and subject reconcile themselves to each other. As the Bishop chases Oldcastle throughout the country with a series of accusations – each one more far fetched than the last – it becomes clear that the Bishop's early suggestions that Oldcastle had been involved with a treason plot had been a mere pretext for his real disdain for Oldcastle's religious errors. In the meantime, the King all but drops out from the play's action; once he discovers and arrests the members of the Cambridge faction, he is nowhere to be found. As the play comes to a close, Oldcastle prepares to flee to Wales, where he hopes to escape the Bishop's clutches. As Oldcastle prepares to leave with Lord Powess, the latter advises, "Then, let us hence: you shall be straight provided / Of lusty geldings, and once entered Wales, / Well may the Bishop hunt, but, spight his face, He never more shall have the game in chase" (scene 22, 166-7). Significantly, the King goes entirely unmentioned in the play's final lines. It is an oversight all the more striking insofar as, during the play's opening scene, one of the Hereford judges had defined the central conflict in terms of its significance to the monarchy, noting, "This case concerns the King's prerogative, / And's dangerous to the state and commonwealth" (scene 1, 99-100). In his continued pursuit of Oldcastle as though the King's wishes were irrelevant, the Bishop appears to have made up his own mind on the law. And in his resolution, the Bishop promotes an agenda that finds itself fundamentally at odds with the commonwealth's interests.

In this respect, the difference between the two stage versions of King Henry could not be more striking. While Shakespeare shows his King uncover the Southampton plot as a first step, if not a precondition to his military campaign, Munday and his co-authors present the King at his weakest at precisely the moment he believes that crisis has been resolved. In their redemption of Oldcastle, the lord comes across as a loyal subject whose allegiance to the crown should never have been in question; but this redemption comes only at the cost of raising deeper, and more challenging questions as what that loyalty entails. As the play suggests, Oldcastle's devotion to the crown leads to his

exile, almost as though, paradoxically, such devotion were the very characteristic that let his fellowship with the commonwealth be called into question in the first place. In tracing the events that lead to Oldcastle's exile, the playwrights reminded their audience just how delicate a matter it was to differentiate a trustworthy member of the commonwealth from a potential traitor. But in making the case for Oldcastle's unequivocal preference of his political duties over his perceived ecclesiastical obligations, the playwrights suggest that the issue ultimately is subject to factors beyond the ability of the King, or even of Oldcastle himself, to control.

In staging Oldcastle's continued persecution throughout Henry's reign, Munday's play is designed to provoke a complex array of responses. To be sure, the play means to valorize Oldcastle as a figure during Henry's reign who actually did stand out by rejecting the church of Rome; just as certain, the play appeals to a collective sense of indignation, if not outrage, as Oldcastle endures persecution from a corrupt church. If the King proves reluctant to prosecute Oldcastle until circumstances prevent him from doing otherwise, and if he shows himself quick to back down from his accusations the moment Oldcastle gives him an opportunity, by the same token the King proves unable to stop the Bishop from prolonging his attacks, even after he has been cleared of any involvement with the Cambridge faction. But it is difficult not to notice a conspicuous resemblance between Oldcastle's persecution and more contemporary examples of so-called "church papists," who were attuned to the complex problem of drawing distinctions between following one's religious conscience and pledging loyalty to the crown.[3] It is just as difficult not to notice how quickly the Bishop's complaints against Oldcastle's alleged heretical beliefs give way to charges of treason, echoing the very shift in terminology that had characterized the Elizabethan treatment of religious dissenters for the previous two decades.[4] Most important, the play's didactic characteristics indicate that, to the extent that the conspiracy against Henry V touched on religious controversies within the commonwealth, those controversies turned out to be inessential with respect to the more fundamental motives of ambition and revenge. As the play reminds its audiences, notwithstanding the abundance of printed material that continued to incite fears of a militant Catholic population within the country, religious dissent and genuine threats to political security did not necessarily go hand in hand.

By drawing attention to Oldcastle's steadfast allegiance to the crown, represented by his refusal to take part in the Southampton conspiracy, the play makes the case that dissent from the crown's religion does not entail dissent from the Kingdom itself.[5] In a recent reading of the play, Donna Hamilton has offered a compelling explanation for the very different treatments of the Southampton conspiracy by the rival companies.[6] Noting that top billing for

authorship went to Anthony Munday, she contends that the play's content lent itself to Munday's ostensibly larger concern to work out solutions for subjects who experienced divided loyalties – specifically, loyalties to the crown and the Church of Rome. As the play argues through its portrayal of the central character, that apparent conflict turns out not to be as difficult as defenders of the Reformed state religion had maintained. While Oldcastle is identified as a supporter of the Lollards, and named as a "protestant" several times throughout the play, he makes no bones about his simultaneous loyalty to King Henry, and he calls the Cambridge plot exactly what he recognizes it for, namely "notorious treason." By contrast, the conspirators mistakenly assume that Oldcastle's ongoing battles with the church would make him an ideal candidate for their revolt against the crown, and their downfall is brought about in large part by this false surmise. As Hamilton concludes, Munday's rendition of Oldcastle enables a two-pronged critique. On the one hand, the play recalls Henry V's oftentimes cruel and unwarranted persecution of the Lollard sect, thereby raising challenges to more recent attempts to celebrate him as a proto-Protestant hero. More important, the play exposes the fallacious reasoning that uncritically connects religious difference with political disloyalty, and to that end the play suggests a critique of more contemporary state treatments of loyal Catholics. If some protestants had proven loyal to their political sovereign, Hamilton argues, might a similar compromise be possible for Catholics under Elizabeth?

If Oldcastle is distinguished for his allegiance, however, it is of a particularly ineffectual sort. Presumably, this would have been given fuller illustration through the (now missing) second part, when his persecutors would have caught up with him.[7] While the play thus makes its case for Oldcastle's political loyalty in spite of his religious beliefs, in the end we are left to wonder exactly how – or even whether – loyal subjects and potential traitors can be differentiated from each other in the first place. For if an individual could remain as steadfast to the monarchy as Oldcastle had proven to Henry, Oldcastle's eventual demise exposed conditions within the kingdom where loyalty no longer was sufficient to guarantee individual safety. At any rate, it leaves enough room to doubt that, with respect to Oldcastle, the King was in strong enough a position to decide. And in many respects, this apparent weakness would have been at least as pressing a concern as a treason plot, which, after all, is foiled.

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Notes

[1] Peter Corbin and Douglas Sledge eds., *The Oldcastle Controversy: The Life of Sir John Oldcastle, The Famous Victories*, The Revels Plays Companion Library (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991). Subsequent references to the play, which appear parenthetically within the text, refer to this edition.

[2] Critics have offered a variety of responses to Shakespeare's largely evasive treatment of the arrest of the Southampton conspirators. Explanations range from bad faith on the King's part, to a necessary (albeit weak) will to forget on the playwright's part, to a strategic need to conceal real motives through ostentatious proclamations on everybody's part. For a brief review of this episode, and its treatment by Shakespeare, see Harold Godard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, volume 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 228-31; Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings* (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 70-75; Jonathan Baldo, "Wars of Memory in *Henry V*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996): 157-8; Karl P. Wentersdorf, "The Conspiracy of Silence in *Henry V*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 27 (1976): 264-287. Each of these responses shares the belief that, for one reason or another, either Henry, the audiences, or some combination of both could not directly face the circumstances that led to one of the King's most significant political crises without jeopardizing the very attributes that made him suitable for near sanctification among an audience of militant Protestants in the first place. By contrast, the *Oldcastle* play suggests that, in fact, at least a portion of London's play-going population could face these episodes with little trouble.

[3] Although space does not permit for this essay, I rely here on the historical scholarship of Alexandra Walsham and Allison Shell, for an overview of the complexities and dilemmas that faced Catholics who accepted outward conformity under Elizabeth. See Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Rochester, NY: The Boydell Press, 1993), esp. chapter four; Allison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. chapter three.

[4] In this respect, the literary figure's suspicion of Oldcastle bears an uncanny resemblance to John Leslie, whose own objective in the *Treatise of Treasons* was to contend that the Queen's privy council had been effectively hijacked by Protestant extremists.

[5] Cf. Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, p. 112.

[6] Donna Hamilton, *Anthony Munday and the Catholics, 1560-1633* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 137-45.

[7] Cf. Susannah Brietz Monta, *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). As Monta reminds us, 187, the second part was likely to portray Oldcastle as a proto-Protestant martyr.

Jen Holland

Being Mephistopheles: A Devil of a Choice

If the Underworld held an awards ceremony to honor the most devil-like character in Early English literature, who might the nominees be? Lucifer brooks no rivals, but what if this award was called the "Mephistopheles Malevolence Award?" Imagine that this year's finalists are Shakespeare's Iago (*Othello)* and Middleton's De Flores (*The Changeling*), who is a newcomer to this contest. To make an informed decision, you must know something about demons. What makes a "Mephistopheles"? and what makes each semi-finalist a contender for the title?

In literature, the name *Mephistophiles* (later spelled in Goethe's work as *Mephistopheles*) made its "first attested appearance" in the English *Faustbook*, published in 1587 (Russell 61), and was an alternate name for the Devil. Lucifer, Beelzebub, Astaroth, Leviathan, Behemoth, Satan—these names were common in demon nomenclature (West 70). Mephistopheles was not viewed as Lucifer's second-in-command until after Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, in or around 1604. It is Mephistopheles whom Faustus conjures (or is allowed to conjure) in his quest to learn the Dark Arts. What is Mephistopheles' non-literary origin?

Jean Bodin in his book *On the Demon-Mania of Witches* warns, "As for the origin of demons it is an extremely difficult thing to confirm" because the "subject and origin of demons surpasses our understanding" (47). However, he and the bulk of seventeenth century Christian writers contend Mephistopheles was:

> [. . .] the first to join with Lucifer during the rebellion against God at the beginning of time. When the rebel angels were banished from Heaven, Mephistophiles was the second to fall, after Lucifer. In exchange for his loyalty, Lucifer granted him power in Hell, appointing him his second-in-command. (Burton 61)

Legends abound regarding Mephistopheles' deeds,[1] some of which are quite amusing, but until Marlowe's *Faustus* Mephistopheles rarely appeared in literature. Perhaps it took the genius of Marlowe to develop the Mephistopheles persona we recognize today.

Reginald Scot, in his seminal work *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, echoes the belief of Renaissance demonology experts when he asserts the devil could "take (saie they) what shape he list" (103) and could even carry bodies. Through it all, though, even if "the wicked angell [was given] extraordinarie shape," it was only "in order for him to be an instrument of God's will" (103).

It is highly likely Marlowe was familiar with these demonic concepts, as he incorporates them into *Faustus*. Mephistopheles does God's will: he encourages the Doctor's pride, ambition and insolence. Mephistopheles' job, then, is to provide enough evidence to God to justify a soul's damnation, thus procuring those souls for Lucifer. Augustine noted, "The Devil is not evil in so far as he is an *angel* but in so far as he is, of his own volition, perverse" (Augustine qtd. in Weyer 3). Faustus' perversity, pride, and ambition mirror traits of Mephistopheles, whose own fall was caused by the same foibles.

Other traits displayed by Mephistopheles are mendacity, trickery, lack of proper remorse, charm, flattery and the willingness—nay, a delight in—taking risks, even with no prospect of gain. Mephistopheles, damned at the outset of *Faustus*; has no chance of regaining his former status, yet he relishes aiding and abetting the Doctor's downfall. The charade of the contract with Lucifer was orchestrated by Mephistopheles with malicious delight. Devils, it was widely known, could not enter into binding contracts with humans, nor could they affect a truly faithful soul. Says Mephistopheles of the Old Man: "His faith is great. I cannot touch his soul/ But what I may afflict his body with I will attempt, which is but little worth" (*Faustus*, 5.1.78-80).

Armed now with facts regarding Mephistopheles and demonic behavior, it is time to take a good look at our contenders and see which one will walk away with the prize.

De Flores, a product of the imaginations of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, materializes first in a play entitled *The Changeling*, wherein he plays a top-level servant to Vermandero, father of the beautiful and sexually ripe Beatrice. She is unhappily affianced to her father's choice, Alonzo, but she falls in love with Alsemero, a nobleman who thinks he is only passing through Alicante, Spain; that is, until he meets Beatrice. What is a girl to do? (Hopefully, not what this girl does.) She decides to rid herself of the pesky Alonzo so she can marry Alsemero.

Enter De Flores. From the moment he appears, we sense his evil. Far from the beauty his name suggests, he suffers from a disfiguring skin ailment. Beatrice alludes to this at line 239 in Act One, scene one, after she drops her glove and De Flores picks it up for her. She recoils and says, "Take 'em and draw thine

own skin off with 'em." Undaunted, he fondles the forsaken glove and says, "If but to vex her, I'll haunt her still / Though I get nothing else, I'll have my will" (245-46). This couplet is worthy of Mephistopheles, surely.

In Act Two, scene one, we learn De Flores manufactures reasons to be near Beatrice, in spite of her public cruelty to him. He says, "I must confess my face is bad enough, But I know far worse had better fortune" (2.1.37-38). Confident in his own charm, he makes some witty observations on others' visages:

> And yet such pick-haired faces—chins like witches',
> Here and there five hairs whispering in a corner
> As if they grew in fear one of another,
> Wrinkles like troughs where swine deformity swills. (2.1.40-44)

We learn, too, that he "tumbled into the world a gentleman" (49) and he was the victim of hard fate. He espies Beatrice and welcomes the verbal torrent of abuse he is certain she will dispense. He intelligently senses that Beatrice will soon want a favor, and he will be able to provide it: the killing of Alonzo.

Already, at lines 68 and 69 of Act Two, scene one, he is considering the murder. Beatrice says, "Slave, when wilt make an end?" (68) and (in one of many asides) he says, "Too soon I shall" (69). Why does he take the abuse Beatrice heaps upon him? Because "Wrangling has proved the mistress of good pastime; As children cry themselves asleep, I ha' seen Women have chid themselves abed to men" (87-89). As his sole purpose is to bed Beatrice, taking her abuse is just one step toward that goal.

Beatrice indeed decides to "serve [her] turn upon him" in Act Two, scene two (69), calling him by his proper name, instead of the usual expletive. She actually flirts with and flatters him, which, though he knows "'Tis the same physnomy, to a hair and pimple/ Which she called scurvy scarce an hour ago" (76-77), he is "up to the chin in heaven!" (78).[2] Beatrice finds in De Flores a most willing servant, and he consents to the murder of Alonzo, but not until he utters some of the finest poetry in the play (106-10). De Flores can be dapper, witty, crafty, strong, charming and ruthless: just like Mephistopheles.

Beatrice, however, does not really understand who she is dealing with; thinking she will either send De Flores away after the murder, or pay him off handsomely. When De Flores returns after the brutal stabbing of the hapless Alonzo (who thought he was on a sightseeing tour of the castle), she discovers De Flores' true intent. After the initial shock—tears of joy upon hearing of Alonzo's death which turn to tears of loathing and disgust at its manner—

Beatrice dispenses with remorse. She is ambitious and greedy and she says, reminiscent of the Macbeths, "Murder, I see, is followed by more sins" (3.4.164).

De Flores' reaction is significant: "My thoughts are at a banquet for the deed / I feel no weight in't; 'tis but light and cheap" (3.4.18-19). Not an iota of remorse dwells in him. At line 106, he momentarily turns sinister and threatening to Beatrice; he reminds her of his most willing service and eschews both the ring and the money she offers. He tells her what he really wants—her body. Can he be more despicable than at that moment? We share Beatrice's revulsion, but recoil at her willingness, in the end, to submit to De Flores' carnal demand.

Nothing seems to faze De Flores, not even the appearance of Alonzo's ghost at Beatrice's wedding to Alsemero (4.1). It startles De Flores only for a moment, and then he gets over it. Ghosts apparently do not have the same effect on him as, say, Hamlet or Macbeth.

After Tomazo greets "Honest De Flores" (an appellation used almost as often in *The Changeling* as in *Othello* when describing Iago), Alonzo's grieving and angry brother becomes the first person to provoke a tiny, short-lived spark of remorse in De Flores (4.2.36). He says, "His company ev'n o'erlays my conscience" (56). Did a guilty look pass over De Flores' face? If it did, Tomazo ignored it, for he says shortly thereafter, "That De Flores has a wondrous honest heart" (57).

That heart is nowhere in sight when, in Act Five, scene one, De Flores tortures Beatrice's already overworked imagination with his coarse description of the fun her lady's maid, Diaphanta, is having with Beatrice's husband. "Who'd trust a waiting woman?" says De Flores; "They're mad whelps; You cannot stave 'em off from game royal" (17-21). For good measure, he tells Beatrice he could have helped her to an apothecary's daughter instead, who would have finished and been out by eleven o'clock.

After getting his digs in, he cheerfully devises a diversion whereby he and Beatrice can get Diaphanta not only out of the bedroom, but out of their lives, with a well-timed murder. The Ghost of Alonzo glides by again, with even less success than in Act Four, and De Flores says, "I dread thee not" (5.1.61). Apparently Alonzo is as ignored in death as he was in life.

In Act Five, scene two, Tomazo—who seems to have changed his opinion yet again—strikes De Flores. Although justifiably angry, De Flores prudently decides to ignore the blow rather than chance discovery as the perpetrator of Alonzo's murder. After all, "The better part of valor is discretion," as a former Mephistopheles Award nominee, Falstaff, once said (*1H4,* 5.4.118).

Shortly thereafter De Flores meets Beatrice in the garden. Observing from a window, Jasperino and Alsemero report the upshot of the meeting (5.3.1-6). They are certain that Beatrice and De Flores were not discussing the weather. When Beatrice returns to the chamber, Alsemero accuses her of being a whore; she confesses to this and adds, "Your love has made me / A cruel murd'ress" (67). Alsemero echoes Othello when he says, "The bed itself's a charnel, the sheets shrouds for murdered carcasses" (87). Alsemero locks Beatrice in his closet while he thinks what to do about it all. De Flores enters. Alsemero eventually gets a confession out of him, too, and a wit-laced confession it is. Alsemero says De Flores delivered "a brave bloody blow [. . .] upon Piracquo" and De Flores says, as though musing, "Upon? 'Twas quite through him, sure" (110-12). De Flores has a further blow for Alsemero, who thinks the murder is sufficiently damning until he hears De Flores' confession regarding his wife's behavior. De Flores taunts him with, "It could not be much more; 'Twas but one thing, and that she's a whore" (116-17). Alsemero, beside himself now, moans a time-honored tragic phrase: "How should blind men know you from fair-faced saints?" (118)

Beatrice, meanwhile, yells from within the closet, and De Flores says, "Let me go to her, sir" (5.3.120). Alsemero agrees, telling him to "Rehearse again your scene of lust, that you may be perfect when you shall come to act it to the black audience" (123-25), a statement matching the notion that devils end up doing God's work. De Flores ensures that neither he nor Beatrice will escape retribution for their murderous acts.

When the rest of the characters come into Alsemero's chamber, they are treated to the sounds of sex and death coming from within the closet. Shocked and horrified (he should not have been; he encouraged De Flores to do it), Alsemero lets them out. De Flores had stabbed Beatrice while they were closeted together; his "Nay, I'll along for company" (5.3.148) may indicate he stabbed himself, too. Bleeding, Beatrice speaks first: "Mine honor fell with him [De Flores], and now my life" (167). Then De Flores makes sure everyone knows he loved her "in spite of her heart" and also that he got her "honor's prize" (174,177), leaving none of Beatrice's pleasures for anyone else to enjoy: "I thank life for nothing but that pleasure; it was so sweet to me / That I have drunk up all" (178-80). He then kills himself before Alsemero can torture him, and Beatrice follows De Flores in death, saying, "'Tis time to die when 'tis a shame to live" (189).

Is it any wonder De Flores is a finalist in the Malevolence Awards? It is delightful to have someone new grace the stage in this contest; our next contestant, Iago, has won it nearly as often as Dr. Faustus, our Mephistopheles Emeritus.

Iago is an invention of the mature William Shakespeare, making his entrance in *Othello The .;p-Moor of Venice*. Awards legend has it that Mephistopheles once jokingly asked, "With Iago around, am I redundant?" (Could Mephistopheles be suffering from an "Iago complex"?) You need not worry, Mephistopheles; your title is safe—for all eternity, in fact.

From the very first scene, Iago complains about Othello's choice of Cassio over him for the post of lieutenant. Iago remains in his position as standard-bearer, which position may have been a deliberate choice by Shakespeare. According to Bodin "the devil [. . .] was chief and standard-bearer of the army that rebelled and forsook the commands of the divine mind" (1.1.47, fn.17). Iago assures Roderigo he "follow[s] him to serve my turn upon him / We cannot all be masters, nor all masters truly followed" (42-43). In addition to the anger Iago feels about being passed over for promotion, he delights in doing harm. As De Flores did to Alsemero, Iago tortures the half-asleep Brabantio, Desdemona's father, saying, "Even now, now, very now, an old black ram is tupping your white ewe" (88-89). Once Iago fully riles Brabantio (with the aid of the lovelorn Roderigo), "Honest Iago" scampers off to "warn" Othello (33).

Like De Flores, Iago does not appear in every scene, but when he does, there will always be wit, devilment, or murder afoot. It is easy to imagine him plotting the next deceit, even when he is off-stage.[3] Remorseless, he makes no apologies: "'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus," he says in Act One, scene three. He, like De Flores, also knows "We have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts" (329-30). However, he begins to lose that cool when faced with Roderigo's mooning over Desdemona. "Come, be a man! Drown thyself? Drown cats and blind puppies!" (334). Iago cannot afford to lose Roderigo yet, and is trying to keep him on side in order to get at Othello. Iago's difficulty in keeping his cool is one of the major differences between Iago and De Flores, perhaps because their motivations are different. De Flores does it for lust and love and Iago does it, if it can be called a motivation, from his well of generalized malice. Iago vehemently reiterates, "I retell thee again and again, I hate the Moor" (361). We learn at line 381 that he also believes Othello slept with Emilia, but the charge is so improbable it rings of "excuse" and not "reason."

Ostensible reasons for their diabolical plotting aside, what emanates from both Iago and De Flores is the sense that "Plots are fun." Plotting, conniving and murder is second nature to them, and the more intricate the plot, the better—just like Mephistopheles. It is devilment for its own sake. As discussed earlier, the devil is evil only insofar as he chooses to be perverse. Both Iago and De Flores definitely choose to be perverse, and they make no apologies for their choices. The Renaissance view of sin was that it resulted from intentionality, and even if the sin were intentional, repentance and a contrite heart insured forgiveness.

In Act Five Othello calls Iago a "demi-devil" and asks him why he did what he did to Roderigo, Cassio, Desdemona, Othello and even Iago's own wife, Emilia. Iago replies briefly and enigmatically: "Demand me nothing. What you know, you know / From this time forth I never will speak word" (302-03). Iago does not speak again, but he silently encourages the assembled characters to believe he is the very devil, which is in and of itself a mortal sin. Othello looks for Iago's cloven hooves ("but that's a fable" (286)) and says, "If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee" (286-87).

Is Iago a devil? Remember, the devil can "take [. . .] what shape he list" (Scot 103). Iago does not die at the end of the play—did Shakespeare wish to imply Iago was an actual devil, and therefore incapable of being killed? His litany of evil includes (but is not limited to): the winding-up of Brabantio; blaming Roderigo for Brabantio accosting Othello; gulling Roderigo out of jewels and money to woo Desdemona on his behalf; getting the alcoholic Cassio drunk so he fights with Montano and loses his position with Othello; encouraging Cassio to then petition Desdemona to reinstate him in Othello's good graces; feeding Othello's paranoia through various means, including using the handkerchief Emilia unwittingly picked up for him; encouraging Roderigo's attempt to kill Cassio; and, finally, killing his wife Emilia, his "friend" Roderigo, and directly or indirectly contributing to the deaths of Brabantio, Desdemona and Othello.

All the information needed to give the Mephistopheles Malevolence Award has been presented. Both nominees have much to recommend them, but my choice would be De Flores. Why? Apart from my predilection for cheering the underdog, Iago had no convincing motive for the level of evil he perpetrated; also, he did not profit from it in any way. Mephistopheles may have delighted in evil for its own sake in *Faustus*, but remember: although he had already been banished from God's presence at the time of his meeting with Faustus, originally, Mephistopheles had a powerful motive—the belief that Lucifer was right and God was wrong. He felt some remorse at first, but he knew it was fruitless and focused instead on his goal of obtaining more souls for Lucifer; this he thoroughly enjoyed. De Flores' evil, done in as witty and cunning a manner as Iago's, was also goal-oriented: he wanted Beatrice, and he got her. I love the reckless abandon and pure lustiness of his pursuit; it is a more juicy, satisfying evil than Iago's motiveless, diffuse brand of wickedness.

But enough of my thoughts: who have the judges chosen? Richard III, head of the panel, is approaching the stage. "A decision has been reached. And the winner is . . ."

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[1] These included the designing of orca whales, seals and other ocean mammals-perhaps this is where the phrase "devil and the deep blue sea" originated? (Burton 61)

[2] This is, incidentally, about the range for a ninth-tier-devil; they can espy heaven, but they're not allowed to go any further.

[3] For an Iago of this ilk, who stands in the aisles biting his nails and watching the action, read Brantley E1-E4.

Bruce E. Brandt

A Note on Teaching *The Taming of the Shrew*

The last three times I offered a graduate-level Shakespeare course I focused on the early modern construction of gender and sexuality. The inclusion of *The Taming of the Shrew* in such a course seems virtually unavoidable, and since we proceed chronologically, we begin with that play. *The Taming of the Shrew* has long been successful in performance. Margaret Jane Kidnie's summary of its production history in her handbook to *The Taming of the Shrew* points out that since the eighteenth century it has been among the most frequently produced of Shakespeare's plays (counting Garrick's abridged version, *Catharine and Petruchio*), and that its popularity continues to this day. A box office survey taken at the Royal Shakespeare Theater in Stratford-upon-Avon a few years ago identified the play as the second most popular in the canon. It ranks in the top ten of productions at the Stratford Festival in Ontario, Canada, where it has been produced more frequently than plays such as *King Lear* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Starring Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, it was the first play of Shakespeare to be filmed as a feature-length "talkie," and since then there have been at least 18 screen versions of the play. Moreover, as Kidnie argues, the play apparently "remains of interest to audiences, not despite, but because of, its controversial staging of a battle of the sexes, and there is some evidence to suggest that revivals of *The Shrew* tend to cluster around those decades when debates about 'the woman question' seem most pressing" (118-19).

In the classroom, however, it is easy to lose sight of the play's entertainment value. Although Shakespeare typically interrogates the stereotypes that he uses, such is not the case in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Readers and audiences may debate whether or not Katherina has found love and happiness by the end of the play and how mutual the feelings of Petruchio and Katharina may be, but the basic assumptions of Elizabethan patriarchy are not called into question, and the premise that it would be acceptable, even proper, to train one's wife in the same way that one trains a falcon requires more suspension of disbelief than is easy to give. For my students, the difficulty is increased by our ancillary readings, which include, in whole or in part, contemporary treatises and homilies on marriage, a discussion of a woman's legal status after marriage, the differing authority of husband and wife within the household, contemporary arguments for and against wife beating, and several early modern depictions of shrews and what might be done to them, such as being forced to wear a scold's bridal or to undergo cucking, which was being strapped to a chair which was then raised and lowered in and out of the water.[1] Our anthologies epitomize the mistreatment of women in shrew literature with "A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin, for Her Good Behavior." This ballad describes a wife

who is wrapped in a salted horsehide by her new husband and beaten until she bleeds. Her mother is appalled, but her father and everyone else approves of this violent cure for her shrewishness. A strong focus on such texts tends to overpower the play. One sees only its dark side.

The only real answer to this quandary is that *The Taming of the Shrew* must be seen as a farce rather than as a romantic comedy. Perhaps the most important articulation of this view remains Robert Heilman's "The *Taming* Untamed, or, The Return of the Shrew," which was published in 1966. Parts of the argument also appeared in his introduction to the Signet Classic edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*, so the argument became widely known. Heilman's argument is that the psychological appeal of farce is precisely that the genre "offers a spectacle that resembles daily actuality but lets us participate without feeling the responsibilities and liabilities that the situation would normally evoke. . . . Farce offers a holiday from vulnerability, consequences, costs" (152). "In farce," Heilman emphasizes, "the human personality is without depth. Hence action is not slowed down by thought or by the friction of competing motives. Everything goes at high speed, with dash, variety, never a pause for stocktaking . . ." (152-3). The lack of depth in characterization, Heilman notes, both enables and requires a rapid pace of action. That is, since motives and logical connections between actions do not bear scrutiny, the play must speed along, and it can speed along because we are not detained by depth or complexity of characterization. Characters in farce "are not really hurt, do not think much, are not much troubled by scruples" (154).

> Farce often turns on practical jokes, in which the sadistic impulse is not restrained by any sense of injury to the victim. It would never occur to anyone that Sly might be pained or humiliated by acting as a Lord and then being let down. No one hesitates to make rough jokes about Kate (even calling her "fiend of hell") in her hearing. No one putting on a disguise to dupe others has any ethical inhibitions; the end always justifies the means. When Kate "breaks the lute to" Hortensio, farce requires that he act terrified; but it does not permit him to be injured or really resentful or grieved by the loss of the lute, as a man in a non-farcical world might well be. Verbal abuse is almost an art form; it does not hurt, as it would in ordinary life. No one supposes that the victims of Petruchio's manhandling and tantrums—the priest and sexton at the wedding, the servants and tradesmen at his home—really feel the outrageous treatment that they get. (154)

It would be hard to disagree: no critic expresses concern over the violence offered to Hortensio. The question is whether or not Katherina remains entirely at this level of farce. Heilman makes a strong case for the logical difficulties

posed by taking her to be anything but a shrew who gets tamed, but clearly many critics and audiences do so, and even so early in his career it may be that we can see Shakespeare's penchant for pushing the boundaries of genre, for making stock characters three-dimensional.[2] Nonetheless, the farcical elements are there, and a production that neglects them cannot truly succeed. An example would be the RSC production mounted at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2003. Far from exploiting the strengths of farce and moving rapidly enough to keep the audience from thinking about the reality of what was happening to Kate, this production encouraged us to ponder her situation and treatment. It became a dismal play about an abused woman. There was an obvious reason for this emphasis. The RSC performed the play in conjunction with John Fletcher's *The Tamer Tamed; or, A Woman's Prize*, a sequel written about twenty years after *The Taming of the Shrew*. Fletcher's premise is that Katherina has died and that Petruchio has taken a second wife named Maria. Other characters in the play remember Petruchio's treatment of Katherina and generally feel sympathetic towards his new wife. Many aspects of the plot mirror *The Shrew*. For example, there are two suitors for Maria's younger sister Livia—old Gremio, who is still seeking a wife after failing to wed Bianca, and Rowland, a young man more to Livia's liking. The twist is that Maria, who appeared quite mild when she married, now announces that she will not sleep with her husband until he has been tamed to her will, and the other women in the play join her rebellion. The play does not, though, simply reverse the roles of tamer and tamed. Fletcher's play indicates that Petruchio and Katherina's marriage had not been happy. He remained domineering, but her shrewishness resurfaced. They had made each other miserable. Maria, in contrast, does not strive simply to win. She negotiates a marital state in which neither is dominated and both are happy.

Thus, to create a stronger contrast and ultimately show a reformed Petruchio in *The Tamer Tamed*, this RSC production of *The Shrew* required us to focus on Petruchio's domineering behavior as such. Whether or not one is fully persuaded by the entirety of Heilman's argument, I believe that a successful *Shrew* requires the velocity, physical comedy, and superficiality of farce. Fortunately, a marvelous performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* is again available. It was first produced for the theater by the American Conservatory Theater of San Francisco and then televised on Great Performances: Theatre in America in 1976.[3] It was restored and released on VHS through the Broadway Theatre Archive in 2000, and is now also available on DVD. That it remains essentially a theatrical performance rather than a film is useful pedagogically; to understand Shakespeare we need to visualize how his plays would have worked on stage. While this stage is not that of an Elizabethan theatre, it is a bare stage, not a set. The context of what we see is created by action and language, and there is nothing to impede the fast pace of the action. The costuming and acting style is

that of the commedia dell'arte style, which keeps the violent interactions at the level of slapstick and free of realistic consequences. While there are cuts, the performance is faithful to the text and the cast proves fully capable of delivering the speeches "trippingly on the tongue."

It is, in short, a performance that keeps the play's underlying "political incorrectness" far enough below the surface that the play's entertainment value can shine through. It enables the class not to avoid the frequently surprising harshness of Elizabethan attitudes, but to be able to engage the play in a way that elicits a variety of readings and complicates our own reaction to the text. This production succeeds wonderfully, and not simply because of its commedia dell'arte style. At key moments the play is tailored to evoke particularly positive responses to Kate and Petruchio. These are responses that have been featured frequently in modern criticism and production. I am not concerned whether or not my students ultimately subscribe to any one reading, but the production abets them in thinking through key moments in the play. I would like to conclude by pausing briefly on four such moments.

The first is the initial meeting of Kate and Petruchio. The class I have been discussing meets once a week for three hours, which allows me to show this video in its entirety at our first meeting. However, if forced to choose only one scene to show to a class, it would be this one. The verbal give-and take between the two is matched by their physicality, and the audience is shown that the ensuing battle of the sexes will be between equals—between two people who can both dish it out and take it. One's final interpretation of *The Taming of the Shrew* may or may not sustain this impression, audiences and critics will differ, but entering the battle in this fashion opens up many possibilities. In addition, Katherina's frank appraisal of Petruchio's body, which he does not see, makes it clear that she is attracted to him. Since Shakespearean comedy invariably suggests that true love is always apparent at first sight, the production thus suggests that this is the man Kate should marry, and not just the man that she will have to marry.

The second of these four moments is the scene where Kate and Petruchio are returning to Padua and Petruchio insists that the sun is actually the moon. Her response is one of the cruxes for interpreting the play.

Petruchio: I say it is the moon.
Katherina: I know it is the moon.
Petruchio: Nay, then you lie. It is the blessèd sun.
Katherina: Then, God be blessed, it is the blessèd sun.
But sun it is not, when you say it is not,
And the moon changes even as your mind.
What you will have it named, even that it is,
And so it shall be so for Katherine. (4.5.16-22)[4]

She can be portrayed as now being abjectly beaten down, as one who has learned to give in only superficially, or as John Bean has argued, as one who has suddenly realized that playing these kinds of word games with Petruchio can be mutually fulfilling. The American Conservatory Theatre performance supports the latter. Even as she concedes that the name will be whatever Petruchio wants, her tone belies her words, and she insults him in the emphasis she gives to "changes even as your mind." We continue to hear the stichomythic sparring of the opening. As the video portrays him, it seems that Petruchio is not wholly clear what to do with his victory. However, Kate's enjoyment of the game is suggested more and more strongly as the scene continues. When Vincentio enters and Petruchio suggests to Kate that she should greet this young gentlewoman, Kate does more than acquiesce. She takes the idea and runs with it, and when Petruchio then says that Vincentio is actually an elderly man, Kate not only shifts gears seamlessly but adds a reference to the sun that, as spoken here, becomes a humorous jab at Petruchio.

Kate's throwing of herself into her new and apparently enjoyable role also characterizes the way in which this production presents her delivery of her final 42-line monolog on wifely duty. It is over-the-top, and she enjoys it. At its end Katherina offers to place her hand beneath her husband's foot, an action that derives from a wedding tradition that would have been some forty years out of date by Shakespeare's time. In this production Petruchio completes the gesture, kneeling down and then raising her up. As Kidnie remarks, the question of whether one finds cruelty or mutuality hangs in the balance here (91), and this production leaves open the possibility of mutuality.

The fourth teaching moment occurs when the couple exits the stage for the final time. Petruchio is carrying Kate, so that the audience sees her face, but he cannot, and the play ends with her winking at us. This is a venerable way of closing the play, and Mary Pickford gave such a wink at the end of that first Shakespearean "talkie," though her wink is directed to Bianca, who appears to get the message. The wink does not, of course, foreclose discussion of the gender issues raised by the play (either historical or of our own time). Rather it leaves open possibilities that a darker production would cut off. Seeing her as

actually having Petruchio wrapped around her finger, as Heilman suggests such endings do, may be an overly optimistic projection, but clearly this Kate does not see herself as the loser of the battle.

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The Taming of the Shrew. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Franco Zeffirelli. Perf. Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. 1967. DVD 1999.

The Taming of the Shrew. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Sam Taylor. Perf. Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. 1929. DVD 2007.

Notes

[1] The class texts include Phyllis Rackin's *Shakespeare and Women*, Frances Dolan's *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*, and Stephen Orgel's *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*. For a detailed discussion of the scold's bridal, see the article by Lynda E. Boose.

[2] See the responses to Heilman by Bean and Saccio.

[3] For a production that does not drastically abridge and alter the text, the only alternative to the American Conservatory Theatre production is the BBC/Time-Life production directed by Jonathan Miller, a version that is not only non-farcical, but which has almost no physical comedy at all. Zefferelli's heavily cut and altered version with Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor emphasizes action and physical comedy, but it too has moved away from farce.

[4] The edition cited is Bevington, *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*.

Dr. Gayle Gaskill

Shakespeare's *Henry VI* Plays: Watch The Women

Shakespeare's First Tetralogy, the three plays named *Henry VI* and their finale, *Richard III*, dramatize England's Wars of the Roses (1455-1485). Culminating with the ascendancy of King Henry VII, they mark the end of the medieval period and the rise of the early modern era, the English Renaissance. With the outstanding exception of *Richard III*, these plays were long neglected in performance. Publishing as recently as 2001, H. R. Coursen cites the usual objections to producing Shakespeare's early history plays: authorship controversies, the suspicion that these plays are apprentice work, and fears of confusing audiences with complex, shapeless plots. Then Coursen challenges the objections as he describes successful productions of the 1990's, including two successes by women directors: Karen Coonrod at the New York Public Theater in 1996 and Jane Howell for the BBC in 1992 (205). Steven Skybell, who played York in Coonrod's production, points out his director's unifying emphasis on women from his character's standpoint. York's role is shaped, Skybell finds, from by his "high confrontational scenes with women. . . . That was Karin. It's interesting that the Public hired a woman to direct this play that has such strong women, and she was the one who highlighted that aspect of the character for me" (Pendleton 222). Completing his essay before Michael Boyd directed the First Henriad for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2000, Coursen concludes his survey calling for "more productions in other places" (217), and his call was answered immediately and triumphantly.

Starting in 2000, audiences and critics lauded productions including the RSC's nine-hour trilogy of *Henrys* with *Richard* added for three more hours in 2001. In 2002 through 2004, three separate adaptations of the three *Henrys* condensed to two productions filled theaters in Stratford, Ontario; London, Chicago, New York, and Ashland, Oregon, and in 2006 the Boyd revived his *Henrys* as the first plays in the new Courtyard Theater in Stratford-upon-Avon, with *Richard* added in 2007 and the second Henriad slated to follow. Exhausting to both actors and audiences, Shakespeare's earliest dramatic successes still make good theater. That may be because as generations of interchangeable, aristocratic males in armor battle across the stage to prove the legitimacy of their political authority, Shakespeare and his latest directors focus their audiences' attention on three distinct alternatives to the medieval tradition of militant patriarchal authority, three powerful women. Historically, the first of these is Joan la Pucelle, the Maid, later called Joan of Arc. Joan is France's military adversary to the English army that claims title to her nation after the victory of Henry V at Agincourt. The second is also French, Margaret of Anjou, the bride of young King Henry VI. After she gives birth to a royal prince, Margaret commands the Lancastrian

royalist army in the Wars of the Roses. Fate defeats both these women warriors, but it rewards the third powerful woman of the First Tetralogy, Elizabeth Woodville, Lady Gray, who outwits Richard III and brings in the Tudor dynasty.

Writing about a century after the last battle and near the beginning of his own career as a writer (1590-1592), Shakespeare developed a poetical style that raised the brutal clashes between the red-rosed Lancasters and white-rosed Yorks to the level of epic struggle. Some recent directors have kept audiences alert by emphasizing the plays' military violence with simulated dismemberments. Michael Taylor cites a *Daily Express* review of Michael Boyd's 2000 RSC production: "'A human liver slopped to the floor by my feet. An eyeball scudded past, then a tongue'" (37). Edward Hall, who in London, New York, and Chicago in 2002-2004 directed *Rose Rage*, an abridged, all-male adaptation that excised Joan la Pucelle, set his production in a surreal slaughterhouse. Critic Kenneth Jones quotes Hall's production notes: "'Masked butcher boys doubling as an ensemble chorus create a backdrop to the nobility's orchestrated brutality. . . . Battle scenes and murders are mimed before a background of literal butchery, with raw meat and red cabbage serving as metaphors for the intense violence of royal disputes'" (par. 10). Stage combat, however, whether sensationally realistic or solemnly stylized, holds an audience for three productions only insofar as it serves a dramatic purpose, and Shakespeare's women, who control the prize of the victory, legitimate royal succession in England and France, become the focus of both the battles and the equally dramatic—and much funnier— peace negotiations.

To clinch a peace treaty with a royal marriage as the diplomatic pledge of unfailing loyalty between once hostile parties, each of the plays' male wooers must relinquish military conquest for peaceful sexual conquest, winning the woman's consent and good will. Every hope for a royal heir relies on courtship. As Naomi C. Liebler and Lisa Scancella Shea insist in their recent analysis of Queen Margaret, "the issue of rightful succession dominates the First Tetralogy, and the ambiguity of 'right' allows for the continual shifting of power and the subsequent waves of repression and rebellion" (89). Brought to the most crucial stage of his efforts to assert himself as God's chosen king, every one of Shakespeare's battle-weary Plantagenets turns into an awkward, comic lout who hastily surrenders to a woman's skill of manipulation. The female characters of the *Henry VI* plays consistently defy dull stereotypes of women as submissive pawns in the political power structure, through scenes both of comedy and of dramatic terror.

Basing his plot lines on the *Chronicles* of Edward Hall (1547) and Raphael Holinshed (1577), Shakespeare in the First Tetralogy both traces and challenges the unsteady evolution of a theory of divine kingship from the decline of

medieval patriarchy to the rise of early modern strategic diplomacy. As Michael Hattaway has recently pointed out, both of the Henriads subversively hint "at a causative relationship between male sexuality and military aggression," and "the only example of a just war in the canon" may be King Richard's defeat at the Battle of Bosworth (13-14). The ascendancy of King Henry VII at the end of *Richard III* promises peace, improved economic prosperity, and the growth of learning. At the time of the plays' first performances, Henry's powerful and learned granddaughter, Queen Elizabeth I, had held the throne for over thirty years. About two years earlier, Elizabeth had achieved an imperial military victory, the triumph over the Spanish Armada, which many regarded as divine endorsement of England's Protestant religion, and which confirmed England's new prominence as a major power in Europe and in its own burgeoning colonies.

Dating from the beginning of their performance history, the women's roles have made the First Henriad memorable. As Phyllis Rackin has pointed out, " the earliest surviving reference to a Shakespearean character and to Shakespeare's work as a playwright" is Robert Greene's 1592 allusion to Shakespeare's Queen Margaret. Famously Greene not only calls Shakespeare "an upstart crow" but claims he has a "tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide," an allusion to *3H6*, where the doomed Richard of York calls Margaret a "tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide!" (1.4.138; Rackin 71). Adding statistical evidence to her anecdotal observation, Rackin notes "Philip Henslowe's records of the receipts for [the] initial run [of *1H6*] suggest a figure close to twenty thousand [spectators], more than all but one of the many other plays that Henslowe produced" (76). Supported by its historical precedent in Margaret, the striking concept of a powerful ruling queen is mesmerizing as it is novel. Jean Howard notes "Margaret fills the vacuum created by her husband's own weakness. In their relationship, traditional gender hierarchy is stood on its head" (203). Having learned to view a queen not simply as the passive vessel of patrilineal descent but as an essentially autonomous diplomatic and even military commander, the Elizabethan English audiences were as captivated as are twenty-first century audiences by the First Henriad's three surprising and authoritative women.

Margaret of Anjou, the only female character who figures in all four plays of the First Henriad, is the most powerfully dramatic of the women's roles. She rapidly rises from penniless, pretty princess to become England's de facto king and field general of the king's forces, only to turn cursing crone at her defeat. As a parallel to Margaret's militancy, in the first part of *Henry VI* Shakespeare presents Joan la Pucelle, the warrior maiden who rises from a shepherd with visions of supernatural spirits to become the armed commander of the French army. One after another, these two wily French women prove too clever for the

English men, but each adopts the heroic masculine persona that courts her personal defeat. Libby Appel, directing the First Henriad in 2004 for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland presented Joan , according to reviewer David Templeton, as "suitably brave but pleasantly unstable" (par. 5). Stressing the roles of women as she streamlined her productions to five hours playing time, Appel and her adapter Scott Kaiser reduced the *Henry* trilogy to two plays and significantly named the first "Talbot and Joan," as critic Robert Hurwitt reports. At first Ashland's Joan, played by Tyler Layton, was "easy, breezy, sure-of-herself," the "most compelling" figure of the first play (Hurwitt, pars. 10, 13), in contrast to Jonathan Haugen's Talbot, who emphasized what was "bombastic" (12) in his part. Perhaps in deference to the abbreviated length of the production or to the popular audience's recognition of Joan as a woman canonized in the twentieth-century, Appel and Kaiser cut lines that both cast suspicion on Joan's chastity and announced her final desperate offer to sell her soul to demons for a French victory (Hurwitt, pars. 10, 13). At first Joan outwits and outfights the disorganized English forces and places the Dauphin on the French throne, but at last her mysterious powers desert her, and the victorious Duke of York burns her for a witch.

When the brutality of civil war forces Henry to question the divine right of his own claim to the throne against the Duke of York and his strapping sons, Queen Margaret spreads her colors in the field and like Joan takes up the sword to support the royal claim for Henry's son Edward. The Ashland production called their second *Henry* episode "Henry and Margaret" (Hurwitt, par. 14), once more giving the powerful female role equal billing. As Queen, military commander, and avenger, Margaret defeats, taunts, and murders York, but his three vengeful sons kill her Edward before her eyes. Eventually York's namesake, young Richard, kills Henry as well.

The third powerful woman proves more sympathetic, and though she commands no army, nonetheless defeats the seemingly insurmountable King Richard III. In the third Henry play, Elizabeth Lady Gray rapidly rises from an importunate but insistently honorable widow to become the wife of an English king, the first commoner to do so. Widowed a second time, in *Richard III* she negotiates a marriage for her royal daughter, the surviving heir of King Edward IV, not with King Richard, who demands the marriage to secure and perpetuate his own royal line, but with Henry Tudor, who thereby joins the red rose with the white and concludes the brutal civil wars.

The characterizations of these powerful women question the old patriarchal military model of government. The most complicated questions come from the audience's reading of Queen Margaret, who amazingly draws audience empathy through most of her long performance. On the plains of Anjou, as the burning

Joan la Pucelle utters her last terrified screams, the Earl of Suffolk enters with an aristocratic female hostage. When asked her title, the prisoner offers her most regal identity: "Margaret my name, and daughter to a king, / The King of Naples, whosoe'er thou art" (*1H6*.5.5.7-8). In 2002 in Stratford, Ontario, director Leon Rubin juxtaposed the burning of Joan upstage center above with this first entrance of Margaret downstage center below. In 2000 and again in 2006-2007 the RSC's Michael Boyd, calling his staging of the First Tetralogy *This England*, emphasized the parallel even more solidly by doubling a single actress in both roles —Fiona Bell in 2000, Katy Stephens in 2006. Thus the new name both accounted for the rapid shift of roles and established the comparison between the forceful women.

It also changes the dramatic tone abruptly from terrifying to comic. Margaret's uppity answer vanquishes the Earl, and the captor becomes the captive. Suffolk waxes poetic in his chivalry:

> Be not offended, nature's miracle;
> Thou art allotted to be ta'en by me.
> So doth the swan her downy cygnets save,
> Keeping them prisoner underneath her wings.
> Yet, if this servile usage once offend,
> Go and be free again as Suffolk's friend. (*1H6*.5.5.10-15)

She goes, of course, which prompts the confused Earl to revoke his offer, "O, stay!" and to confide to the audience in an aside that sounds like a country-western song, "My hand would free her, but my heart says no" (*1H6*.5.5.16-17). An awkward wooing proceeds, almost entirely in asides, for the Earl is a married man, and the princess insists on keeping her honor with her chastity, her only instrument for negotiation. What's more, her father is too tight-fisted to ransom his child for money:

> I am a soldier and unapt to weep
> Or to exclaim on fortune's fickleness. (*1H6*.5.5.89-90)

So Suffolk invents the expedient of making Margaret the bride of King Henry. Now Margaret's father is in a strong position to dicker, and he demands a heavy price: "the countries Maine and Anjou, / Free from oppression or the stroke of war" (*1H6*.5.5.110-11). Capable of negotiating a political marriage and of producing a legitimate royal heir, Margaret is more powerful than Joan the Maid.

King Henry, relieved of the necessity of wooing on his own behalf, is smitten by Margaret even before he and his bride share a betrothal kiss, though that one gesture spares Margaret the necessity of producing a dowry as compensation for

the French lands Suffolk has ceded to her father on the King's behalf. A mere half dozen lines from his affianced spouse turn the young King into a weeping, giggling bridegroom convinced by his own hyperbole:

> Her sight did ravish, but her grace in speech,
> Her words yclad with wisdom's majesty,
> Makes me from wond'ring fall to weeping joys,
> Such is the fullness of my heart's content. (*2H6.*1.1.30-33)

With remarkable and instant political wiliness, Margaret grasps the English power structure. Her first victim is the Lord Protector, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, who at her instigation surrenders his office. She manipulates court politics, and she produces a son. When Richard of York claims the throne, she leads an army against him, and at the end of the *Henry VI* plays, she is very near another victory over York's heir before her defeat. It is fatal to underestimate the woman. In an early encounter, York learns that Margaret's forces are about to lay siege to his castle, and reasoning with the old patriarchal bravado, he determines to meet her in the field, though her army is four times the size of his. York's son Richard states the miscalculating cliché: "A woman's general—what should we fear?" (*3H6.*1.2.68), and this remark of rare unconscious irony from the future Richard III signals that a York defeat is at hand.

A dramatic foil for the young Queen Margaret in King Henry's court is Dame Eleanor Cobham, the Duchess of Gloucester and wife of the Lord Protector. Having acquired the habits and ambitions of a Queen while the good Duke Humphrey governed England on young Henry's behalf, Eleanor is Margaret's first rival, and when the Duchess is persuaded to dabble in witchcraft, she becomes an easy prey to humiliation and exile. In Stratford, Ontario, director Leon Rubin cast the very youthful Jane Spence as the Duchess, a strategy that emphasized her naiveté and her doting older husband's consequent vulnerability. Young Margaret will in time follow the Duchess to defeat, as Duke Humphrey's assassins will themselves be assassinated, but while Margaret's star is in the ascendant, she is a fascinating and formidable portrayal of a woman ruler. She draws her greatest audience empathy, on the other hand, when she falls. Then the once fiercely defiant warrior begs for death after she is condemned to watch the bloody assassination of her only son.

In Michael Boyd's RSC productions, the mysterious, prophetic spirits who advised and betrayed Joan—all female—reappeared at the demonic summoning of the Duchess of Gloucester, as reviewer Alastair Macaulay observes (par. 7). Using separate casting strategies for the roles of defiant women, both the British and the Canadian productions thus stressed human frailty in the face of repetitive, metaphysical destiny. Moreover, by linking the female characters to

one another and contrasting them to the men, these recent directors gave audiences a way to order and focus their understanding of the complex, repetitive texts. Reviewer Susan Irvine writes of Boyd's productions that Joan la Pucelle and Margaret "are as ambitious and bloodthirsty as the men. Yet Joan and Eleanor of Gloucester (a regal Maureen Beattie) also embody an anti-rational 'female' intelligence, with access to supernatural truth. Add Ann Ogbomo's sparkling interpretation of her roles as Countess of Auvergne and Lady Elizabeth Gray, and it's almost possible to argue a case for these being women's plays" (par. 6). Reviewing Boyd's production of the final play of the First Tetralogy, Charles Spencer is even more emphatic in recognizing the importance of Shakespeare's women characters: "Apart from Richard it is the festering grief of the bereaved female characters—Elaine Pyke's Queen Elizabeth, Fiona Bell's Queen Margaret, Aislin McGuckin's Lady Anne and Deirdra Morris as Richard's appalled mother—that provide the emotional heart of the play" (par. 11). Men count for greater numbers in the casts, but seeking a point of emphasis, audience attention converges on the women's roles.

In contrast to Queen Margaret, Joan la Pucelle is a purely military figure. A shepherd's child, she claims her authority not from lineage but from divine visions, her wit in out-thinking the English, and her skill with the sword. Eschewing feminine attire, Joan puts on manly armor, and the costume ironically enhances her sexual appeal. Hoping to raise the English siege of Orleans, the Bastard of Orleans presents Charles the Dauphin with "a holy maid" (*1H6.*1.3.30). who credits her remarkable strength to a vision of God's Mother. Initially the Pucelle boasts like a soldier that she can defeat the Dauphin in single combat:

> My courage try by combat, if thou dar'st,
> And thou shalt find that I exceed my sex.
> Resolve on this: thou shalt be fortunate
> If thou receive me for thy warlike mate. (*1H6.*1.3.68-71).

From the first, Charles is taken with the novelty and suggestiveness of her remarkable challenge, and he replies, "In single combat thou shalt buckle with me" (*1H6.*1.3.74). The Dauphin's ignorance in dealing with a woman in any but amorous terms represents his desperate need for Joan's strategic guidance. The moment Joan defeats him, Charles surrenders to her not as to a victorious soldier but as if to a lover. What's more, he uses his princely power of office to woo her in the same clumsy confusion of roles that the newly crowned English King Edward IV will use with better success on Lady Elizabeth Gray. The Dauphin says:

Impatiently I burn with thy desire,
My heart and hands thou hast at once subdued.
Excellent Pucelle if thy name be so,
Let me thy servant, and not sovereign be.
'Tis the French Dauphin sueth to thee thus. (*1H6*.1.3.87-91)

Resolute in her maidenhood, Joan negotiates with Charles to supply her an army, not a tryst, and for a time she rules the French. Once again in single combat, she beats England's mighty Talbot, who hurls feeble threats and sexual abuse when she defeats him in arms. "I will chastise this high-minded strumpet," he cries (*1H6*.1.7.12), but she twice defeats him to his humiliation.

Shakespeare creates a dramatic foil for Joan in the completely fictitious French Countess of Auvergne, who invites Talbot to visit her castle. The old commander accepts with an ominous quip: "I mean to prove this lady's courtesy" (*1H6*.2.2.58). The Countess has set a trap. Once Talbot is within her walls, her porter locks the gates, and she boasts of the revenge she will exact on behalf of France:

I will chain these legs and arms of thine
That hast by tyranny these many years
Wasted our country, slain our citizens,
And sent our sons and husbands captivate— (*1H6*.1.3.38-41)

In the 2002 Stratford, Ontario, production, a young Countess underscored her threat with her hidden dagger, but she was no Joan of Arc with a broadsword. Talbot simply laughed at her as he signaled his waiting soldiers, who blasted their way into the castle and seized its food supplies to victual their regiment. In this production, the soldiers extended their violence from the Countess's possessions to her person, for they raped her as well. The sexual violation emphasized the woman's total defeat. Michael Boyd, on the other hand, eerily doubled Auvergne with one Joan's guiding immortal, female spirits (Macaulay, par. 7) and so preserved Joan's immortal presence after her personal undoing. He also staged a "sensational" rescue for Talbot as, according to reviewer Kenneth Tucker, Talbot's "cohorts swing in upon the stage clinging to . . . ropes" (61). Each production emphasized martial violence and female vulnerability in Auvergne's defeat, but Boyd's double casting stressed the eventual futility of Talbot's extravagant display of military might in overcoming a threat he could have sidestepped with ease.

The last powerful woman of the *Henry VI* plays, Elizabeth Woodville, Lady Gray, presents herself to a king not as a soldier but as a soldier's widow. Her husband, Sir Richard Gray, she tells King Edward IV, has died defending the

Yorkist cause at Saint Albans field, and she sues the new king to restore her family's lands. While Edward's smirking brothers offer sexual innuendos as asides, the King clumsily attempts to use his crown as a tool for seduction. Still addressing Elizabeth simply as "Widow," he asks if she loves her children and whether she would "not do much to do them good?" (*3H6*.3.3.38). After they debate what love a subject owes her monarch, the King assaults the woman: "To tell thee plain, I aim to lie with thee" (*3H6*.3.3.69), and she easily rebuffs the assault: "To tell *you* plain, I had rather lie in prison" (*3H6*.3.3.70). Easily as clever as Queen Margaret's father, though lacking the authority of his royal rank, the widow Gray rapidly negotiates the King's awkward seduction into a marriage proposal, and at her next stage appearance she is a Queen. Elizabeth understands her moral and sexual powers as well as the weakness of her economic, political, and social situation. She has the humility, the wit, and—because she is a fruitful widow, not a maid—the autonomy to negotiate her own contract.

The contract includes great risks. Furious with disapproval at Edward's marriage, the King's brother, the Duke of Clarence, joins Queen Margaret and the Earl of Warwick, the King Maker, to return to the battlefield and recover the throne for King Henry and his son. Stupidly, King Edward tries to comfort his bride by asserting his rank, as if the mere name of King carried authority amidst conflicting claims to the throne:

Edward will be king,
And not be tied unto his brother's will.
. . .
My love, forbear to fawn upon their frowns.
What danger or what sorrow can befall thee
So long as Edward is thy constant friend,
And their true sovereign, whom they must obey? (*3H6*.4.1.64-65; 74-77)

The new Queen is silent. She is too tactful to remark upon the irony of her husband's boast.

In Elizabeth's next scene, Edward is imprisoned and she is pregnant. Necessity lends her resolve, as she explains to her brother:

I'll hence forthwith unto the sanctuary,
To save at least the heir of Edward's right. (*3H6*.4.5.31-32)

Elizabeth is a survivor. Though she produces a male heir before the play's end, this first royal pregnancy is probably her namesake, Elizabeth of York, the daughter for whom the twice-widowed Queen Elizabeth negotiates in *Richard III* a marriage that ends the Wars of the Roses and solidifies the legitimacy of

the Tudor dynasty. Liebler and Shea compare Lady Gray to Queen Margaret as a king's controversial bride, married in order to produce a royal successor. They say, "Unlike Margaret, Elizabeth is not a woman of action. She protects her offspring not by fight but by flight" (90). Admiration for Margaret's heroic pugnacity, however, distracts Liebler and Shea from recognizing that flight is the more savvy policy, for it saves the life of that offspring. Despite her militancy, Margaret departs the stage a childless widow whose only power lies in cursing the Yorkist monarchs who have destroyed the succession she mothered. The more judicious Queen Elizabeth eventually adapts Margaret's skill in cursing to her practical purposes while she still has one offspring who will legitimate the next royal succession. Her powerful and subversive feminine negotiation proves the turning point of the last play of the First Tetralogy, *Richard III*. The master of murder and betrayal, Richard still needs an heir to consolidate his reign into a dynasty, and for an heir he must have a royal bride. Having set his design upon the surviving descendant of his brother, King Edward IV, Richard attempts to negotiate a marriage contract with the King's widow, the bride's mother, though he has murdered her sons. Concluding an intense stichomythic debate of mounting irony, the Queen convinces the self-consciously cynical Richard to swear his faithfulness by invoking not God, his own father's death, or the time to come but his hope for one essential military victory at Bosworth against the rebellious Earl of Richmond. Driven by her angry rebukes, Richard swears to Elizabeth,

> As I intend to prosper and repent,
> So thrive I in my dangerous affairs
> Of hostile arms—myself myself confound,
> Heaven and fortune bar me happy hours,
> Day yield me not thy light nor night thy rest;
> Be opposite, all planets of good luck,
> To my proceeding—if, with dear heart's love,
> Immaculate devotion, holy thoughts,
> I tender not thy beauteous, princely daughter. (*R3* 4.4.328-36)

Thus at her instigation, Richard has cursed himself, and whether the cause is an unexpected divine answer to his devilish prayer or merely Richard's own rising superstitions, night yields no rest and all good luck deserts him. Meanwhile, offstage in the heavily foreshadowed pages of familiar history, the Queen negotiates a separate marriage contract between her daughter and Richmond, the future King Henry VII. Though Richard ignorantly sneers at her for a "shallow, changing woman" (*R3* 4.4. 361), Elizabeth has found in policy an effective, powerful alternative to the weaponry of revenge that prolonged the Wars of the Roses.

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Dr. Kathleen Grode

Bleeding to Life

"Blood," Faust remarks as he covenants in blood with Mephistopheles, "is a juice of a very special kind." Indeed, blood is a fluid of universally acknowledged importance: it forms the strongest bond or creates the deepest divide between men, its rising color denotes both the bloom of health and the fire of fever, and its very existence inspires humankind to spill it in the fury of vengeance as well as the fervor of ultimate sacrifice. Unarguably, Western culture acknowledges blood's duality.

Blood's symbolic dualism is perhaps the most unacknowledged troublesome element within Arthurian legend, partially because discussion of its power as correlatively maleficent and beneficent healing force has been all but swept aside by the academic world. After years of study, not one scholar has attempted to explain the textual elements that bind the beginning of the Grail Quest in Malory – the initial maiming of the Fisher King and destruction of the land – to its completion Vulgate Cycle. These two particular episodes in the saga are especially significant for, although the Vulgate Cycle was translated in the 13th century and Malory developed his tales almost 200 years later, the two versions are undeniably intertwined. The links between these two chronologically reversed halves connote that the original source material from whence the Grail saga is derived was based upon a circular model driven by blood.

The key to unlock the circle lies not only in the blood flowing from the controversial lance, but the very blood shed and offered by the characters through the course of the entire tale. An examination of the ritualistic and superstitious elements of Celtic blood feuds alongside Girard's theories on the universal elements of primitive blood sacrifice illuminates the effects of bloodshed on early communities and offers insight as to how the destructive nature of blood feuds call for further sacrificial bloodshed to contain violence, heal the communal bonds severed by violence and, by doing so, restore order and balance. When one focuses upon the effects of bloodshed in the Grail saga, one can easily use Girard's theories and the rules of the blood feud to trace the cycles of destruction and rejuvenation that originally joined Malory's source material with the Vulgate Cycle author's.

In light of the extensive research performed by Loomis and other scholars, few will dispute that many of the basic roots of Arthurian legend lie in Celtic mythology and culture. Therefore, one must look to ancient Celtic tribal society's views on community, sacrifice, and the attributes of blood to uncover

the superstitious foundations beneath Malory and the Vulgate Cycle's sources that tie their tales into a complete circle of causes and effects, of maleficence and beneficence.

We must first acknowledge that the ancient Celts' concept of community was distinctly different from our modern view. The Celts were a tribal society, and, as such, felt that their communities were inextricably interconnected: the actions performed by one affected all, either for good or ill. Within this model, the necessity of violent sacrifice as a protective and preventive measure against violence (and therein, bloodshed) takes on a distinct significance. As Girard writes,

Recent studies suggest that the physiology of violence varies little from one individual to another, from one culture to another. According to Anthony Storr, nothing resembles an angry cat or man so much as another angry cat or man. If violence did indeed play a role in sacrifice, at least at one particular stage of the sacrificial ritual, we would have a significant clue to the whole subject (2).[1]

Girard's theory of violence and sacrifice revolves around the idea that violence must run its course: once blood has been shed in violence, that is, destructively, that blood must be balanced, or repaid, by blood shed in sacrifice, or blood shed to heal. In other words, someone has to pay the price for violence, and sacrifice offers an alternative channel to the disruption and chaos that an uncontrolled wave of escalating violence in society would mete. "Society is seeking to deflect upon a relatively indifferent victim, a "sacrificeable" victim, the violence that would otherwise be vented on its own members, the people it most desires to protect. . . . Violence is not to be denied, but it can be diverted" (Girard 4). Because sacrifice serves to protect a community from the backlash of its own violence, that community must choose its sacrificial victims from outside itself (i.e., prisoners of war, slaves, or the king or chieftain, whose elevated station necessitates a certain isolation from the very people he governs). Within the person of the sacrifice, the elements of dissension, dispute, and disunity in the community are temporarily eliminated, destructive violence is repaid (or pre–empted) by healing violence, and the fibers binding the community are renewed. "The purpose of the sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric. . . . When men no longer live in harmony with one another, the sun still shines and the rain falls, to be sure, but the fields are less well tended and the harvests less abundant" (Girard 8).

As Girard's theory indicates, within closely connected social groups, such as the tribal Celts, the notion of sacrificial violence to promote balance, communal welfare, and even to ensure the fertility of the land was widely accepted. From this model, one can also easily comprehend how Frazer and Weston connected

the condition of the land to the welfare of the king[2]: in a society wherein the smallest action of one person could affect the entire community positively or negatively, the actions of those within positions of authority would be especially pertinent.

Regardless of their views on the possibility of violence's intercommunal whiplash effect, one cannot deny that the historical Celts were a warlike people. Warfare between tribes, clans, and families was common, and thus the rules and rituals of the blood feud were established based upon the sacrificial concept that a balance of blood must be maintained.

Blood feuds were a common occurrence and often stemmed from tribal raids and the smaller engagements that happened on a regular basis within warrior societies. Anthropologist E. Evans-Pritchard defines the blood feud as

> a relation between parties between whom there is an unsettled debt of homicide which can be settled either by vengeance or by payment of compensation – a temporary state of active hostility which does not compel immediate settlement, but which requires eventual conclusion . . . . A feud has little significance unless there are social relations of some kind which can be broken off and resumed (qtd. in Rosenthal 136).

Celtic blood feuds, however, rarely died a natural death, for they demanded death for death, blood for blood; and required that, for each person killed in one family, a member of equal rank and familial standing within the murderer's family must die. Because early Celtic and Anglo-Saxon societies held a person's entire family, and sometimes community, responsible, and thus culpable, for the actions of any one family member, the entire family on both sides of the feud was considered fair game. Additionally, blood feuds often spanned entire generations and more often than not snowballed into years of murder, for the more members of a family who became involved, the more blood was shed and demanded by each side. "Vengeance was no mere satisfaction of personal feeling, but a duty that had to be carried out even when it ran counter to personal inclination" (Rosenthal 134). Thus, oftentimes, the call for vengeance honor-bound the succeeding generations of the feuding families to continue killing until each felt that the other family's loss equaled their own – a concept founded on the idea that the violence demanded by the blood feud could be neutralized by a balance of blood.

In essence, the ritual of a blood feud relates back to primitive ideas about the nature of blood and sacrifice. For the ancient Celts, only blood could balance blood: the cure stemmed from the problem. In other words, the only way to negate the destructive chaos initiated by the murder of a family member was to

inflict the same type of violence upon the catalysts. In this fashion, the two violent acts might cancel one another out, balance would be maintained, and violence would be contained.

However, both Girard's theory of sacrifice and the escalating nature of the blood feud point to "the fundamental truth about violence; if left unappeased, violence will accumulate until it overflows its confines and floods the surrounding area" (10). Although blood sacrifice and blood feuds both stem from the concept that blood's maleficence and beneficence must be balanced to maintain order, sacrifice is self-contained. The vengeance called for by a blood feud, alternately, is only satisfied when the blood of the killer is spilt, and so leaves no clear distinction between the act for which the killer is being punished and the punishment itself. With this in mind, the rules of the blood feud that, in theory, should contain bloodshed, can hardly be expected to truly restrain the violent impulses that tear society apart. "In fact," Girard writes, "it is vengeance itself that must be restrained" (17). Vengeance is an interminable, infinitely repetitive process. Whenever it manifests itself within a community, it threatens to involve the entire social body. In this fashion, seeking the revenge demanded by the blood feud rules might set off a chain reaction whose consequences will quickly prove fatal to a society of any size (Girard 14-15). The probability of the violence inherent in a blood feud creates the real concern that when outwardly directed violent impulses are foiled, they might seek an outlet closer to hand, and so be re-directed inwards and trap the community in a cycle of destructive violence. This was a very real fear, for when two prominent families in a tribe or community continued a blood feud over a long period of time, their communities inevitably became involved. Theoretically, one community eventually demanded an end to the violence to prevent their community's self-destruction. In such cases, preventive measures had be taken to halt the spilling of maleficent blood. "Here again I return to the idea of sacrifice as I earlier defined it," Girard explains, "an instrument of prevention in the struggle against violence" (17). "In primitive societies the risk of unleashed violence is so great and the cure so problematic that the emphasis naturally falls in prevention. . . . The function of sacrifice is to quell violence within the community and prevent conflicts from erupting" (Girard 19, 14). For the warrior culture of the early Celts, human blood was generally seen as the only sacrifice powerful enough to quell or contain the violence that erupted between and within communities.

Within the Arthurian universe, this same principle – that blood is maleficent or beneficent depending upon the manner in which it is shed – is manifest within the circular construction of the completed Quest. In Malory's "Balin", or "The Knight With Two Swords", the compounding blood feuds and impure blood sacrifices invoke the maleficent power of blood, fissure the close-knit community (a disruption manifested by the blighted lands), and generally

unbalance the universe. These destructive results predict the corresponding beneficent, or healing, balance of sacrificial blood offered in the Vulgate Cycle's "The Grail Quest."

As Malory relates it, "Balin" is a carefully structured series of causes and effects centered in blood feuds and culminating in the Dolorous Stroke, the crowning act of violence that demonstrates the results of the maleficent effects of blood. The destructive whirlpool of events within "Balin" is motivated by a blood feud between Balin's and Arthur's families. In fact, the only reason Balin is present in Camelot to compete for the maiden's sword is because he is being held prisoner "for slaying a knight which was cousin unto King Arthur" (Malory 16).[3] From the time Malory introduces him, Balin is characterized by unbalanced violence. His mere presence in Arthur's court offers the first instance of unbalanced blood, for Arthur has not fulfilled his duty to balance his cousin's blood by killing Balin.

The Lady of the Lake's appearance heralds another unbalanced blood feud. She demands, as the gift Arthur promised her in return for Excalibur, "[t]he head of this knight that hath won this sword. . . for he slew my brother" (19). Balin neither confirms nor denies her charge, but implicates himself in an apparently ongoing blood feud between his and the Lady of the Lake's families, for "he saw the Lady of the Lake which by her means had slain his mother . . . . And with his sword lightly he smote off her head" (19). Again, the blood balance demanded by the rules of the Celtic blood feud is thrown off as Balin has shed additional blood while his own family's 'debt' remains unpaid.

When Balin leaves Arthur's court in disgrace he is pursued and challenged by Lanceor, a knight who intends to even the blood debt Balin owes Arthur and the Lady of the Lake. However, Balin runs Lanceor through, which incites yet another blood feud between Balin's and Lanceor's families. "And trust well, Balin," a dwarf assures the knight as he flees the scene of Lanceor's murder and Columbé's ensuing suicide, "the kin of this knight will chase you through the world till they have slain you" (24). Yet again, the maleficent nature of blood holds sway, for Lanceor's death is never revenged, and the balance of blood demanded by the ritual of the blood feud builds and so, as Girard predicted, "overflows its confines and floods the surrounding area" (10).

Whereas the first three blood feuds in "Balin" directly involve Balin and another party and, within the ritual of the Celtic blood feud, might be considered typical, the destruction wrought by the unbalance of blood breeds further violence, and Balin begins to take others' blood feuds upon himself, acting as if the slain were his kin. First, when Harleus de Berbeus, another knight, is slain by an invisible knight while under Balin's conduct, Balin takes on Berbeus' quest and promises

to avenge his death, saying "[I will revenge your death when I may] and that I make a vow to God and knighthood," even though the two knights are not bound by blood or friendship (28).

Shortly afterwards, as Balin pursues Berbeus' quest accompanied by Berbeus'maiden, he meets Sir Perin de Mount Beliard and witnesses Perin's murder at the hand of Garlon, the same invisible knight who murdered Berbeus. Balin takes Perin's death personally, saying, "Alas, this is not the first despite that he [Garlon] hath done me!" and behaves as if Perin were his close friend or kin, rather than someone he had met only moments before (29).

Last, Balin and Berbeus' maiden stay the night with a man whose son has been wounded by Garlon and needs Garlon's blood to be healed. When Balin discovers this, he vows to shed Garlon's blood and therewith help heal his host's son, again acting as if his host's feud is his own, stating " . . . [Garlon] hath slain two knights of mine in that same manner. Therefore I had liefer meet with that knight than all the gold in this realm, for the despite he hath done me" (30).

Although some might argue that Balin does not consider his dispute with Garlon to be a blood feud, his words and actions during their meeting give evidence to the contrary. Within the rules of a blood feud, he who has had one of his kin slain must publically proclaim his reasons for shedding the blood of the one whom he kills in repayment to the slain's family or community (Rosenthal 137). When Balin and Garlon finally confront one another, Garlon commands Balin to "do that [he] came for," to which Balin responds by announcing to Garlon, Garlon's brother King Pellam, and Pellam's entire court that "this [verbal insult] is not the first spite that thou hast done me, and therefore I will do that I came for." Balin kills Garlon, drives the spearhead that killed Berbeus into Garlon's corpse, then expands, ". . . with that truncheon thou slewest a good knight, and now it sticketh in thy body" (31). Through his proclamation, Balin fulfills a vital, indicative step in the blood feud process by enacting vengeance then declaring that blood shed has been repaid.

As Balin slays Garlon, he simultaneously repays Berbeus's, Perin's, and his host's son's blood, exacting vengeance for three feuds that he had no business becoming involved in, and beginning a new blood feud of his own with King Pellam. Pellam accepts and acknowledges the feud by saying, "Knight, why has thou slain my brother? Thou shalt die therefore or thou depart. . . . there shall be no man have ado with thee but myself, for the love of my brother" (31-32).

At this point Balin has begun, continued, or participated in seven separate blood feuds, three of which he had no binding ties of kinship or friendship to hold him, and two of which he began without justifiable cause. Additionally, the balance

of bloodshed within each of the seven feuds puts Balin, his family, and his chosen community (King Arthur's court) heavily in debt. Within the Celtic conception of violence and the blood feud, blood shed cries out for vengeance and, if the violence is not contained or balanced, violence and destruction have free reign until the debt is repaid, contained, or mediated in some fashion. As Girard stated, "When unappeased, violence seeks and always finds another victim" (2). In "Balin", blood continues to be shed violently, and eventually the destruction culminates in Balin and Pellam's blood feud, for Balin strikes yet another violent blow and tips the blood balance too far. This culmination of maleficent blood causes the multiplied destructive forces of violent bloodshed to recoil upon Balin, Pellam, those in the castle, and the three surrounding kingdoms.

As Girard implies, violence affects and fractures the entire community and, unless pre-emptive measures are taken, blood will tear the very fabric of society apart. In "Balin", King Pellam's wound and the subsequent blight that falls on his land and people symbolizes the ultimate destructive power of unrestrained and unbalanced bloodshed. Within Girard's theory of sacrifice, sacrifices must be made to heal the damage done by violence and restore order to chaos. In "Balin", the characters attempt two times to sacrifice blood and thus stem destruction and initiate healing; however, in both cases the sacrifices fail and result in what Girard calls a "sacrificial crisis". These two failures begin the positive, healing cycle which is the natural upswing from the final downfall encapsulated in the Dolorous Stroke and the blighting of the land and king.

On the road to complete an unspecified quest, Balin and Berbeus' maiden stay overnight at a castle where the knights customarily bleed every maiden who passes through, justifying their actions by stating that "their lady was sick and had lain many years, and that she might not be whole but if she had blood in a silver dish full, of a clean maid and a king's daughter. 'And therefore the custom of this castle is that there shall no damsel pass this way but she shall bleed of her blood a silver dish full'" (29).

Historically, the Celts felt that blood contained the power to heal, strengthen, and impart the qualities of the original owner to anyone who might drink or receive their blood, for, as "the late Dr. Wilde, in his account of Irish folk remedies, mentions the blood of the Welshes as well as that of the Keoughs and Cahills [two Celtic family tribes] as a cure" (Henderson 34). Within "Balin" the lady of the castle needs to be rejuvenated in some manner that apparently only blood can achieve, perhaps due to "the notion that a sharing of blood meant a sharing of life," "for the soul was in the blood" (Firth 118, Henderson 35). Numerous old Irish poems and superstitions about blood emphasize that the essence of who a person was and the source of their strength was contained

within their blood. In this respect the Celts equated blood to life and the soul, making a blood transfer the equivalent of a soul transfer: with his or her blood, the receiver would take the giver's health, strength, purity, and life. Because of the dualistic nature of blood, however, the renewed life of the receiver would cause the death of the giver, for death and life must always remain in balance.

Sacrificially, "blood forms the transition between water-lustration [i.e., purification and healing] and sacrifice," for, depending upon the nature of the illness, healing can only be achieved through the purification enacted by sacrifice (Henderson 220). As Girard relates, "How can one cleanse the infected members of all trace of pollution [illness]? Does there exist some miraculous substance potent enough not only to resist infection but also to purify, if need be, the contaminated blood? *Only blood itself*, blood whose purity has been guaranteed by the performance of appropriate rites – the blood, in short, of sacrificial victims – can accomplish this feat" (28, emphasis mine). Again, blood can both destroy and heal.

In "Balin," the lady of the castle requires a sacrifice to be healed. She needs blood, but her healing is conditional: the blood must be that of a maiden and a princess, and must be collected and offered ritualistically in a silver dish. However something goes wrong, and Berbeus's maiden's blood fails for, as Malory writes, Balin forces the maiden "to bleed by her good will" (implying that she was, at first, unwilling), but "her blood helped not the lady" (29-30).

Because of the dualistic nature of blood to destroy or heal, the failure of the sacrifice implies maleficence, for blood shed, especially for a specific purpose, is never neutral. Thus the failure of the sacrificed blood to heal the lady of the castle causes what Réne Girard calls a "sacrificial crisis."

The failure of a ritual sacrifice resulting in a sacrificial crisis "can cause more harm and unleash even more uncontrollable violence. . . . [A]nything that adversely affects the institution of sacrifice will ultimately pose a threat to the very basis of the community, to the principles on which social harmony and equilibrium depend" (Girard 32). The failure of the maiden's blood to cure the lady of the castle implies that her blood was in some way impure or unworthy, and so she was unable to attract the violent, or destructive, impulses to herself, as is required for a sacrificial victim to heal, contain, or rejuvenate. Ultimately, the sacrificial crisis begun by the failed sacrifice rebounds upon the entire community, for a sacrifice's purpose is to protect the community from violence by offering itself as a substitute for the community. If the transference fails, "the sacrifice loses all efficacy," and the violence is redirected back upon the community the sacrifice was meant to protect or heal (34, 5). As Girard's theory demonstrates, when blood sacrifices go wrong, the blood acts maleficently and, in "Balin", contributes to the cycle of destruction set off by the blood feuds.

In the second instance of attempted blood sacrifice to impart healing, Balin's host tells him that Garlon "wounded thus my son that he cannot be whole till I have of that knight's blood.' . . . 'Then I promise you,' said Balin, 'part of his blood to heal your son withal'" (30). After he kills Garlon, Balin "called on his host and said 'Now may ye fetch blood enough to heal your son withal'" (31). Again, the host's son requires a sacrifice to be healed: Garlon must die so that the he may live. Yet again, the sacrifice must be conditional, for the blood necessary for the healing to take place must be Garlon's. And yet again, the concept of sacrifice implied in this type of healing is overshadowed by the destructive nature of blood shed in blood feuds. Because of its duality, the same blood cannot be shed in vengeance and for healing; the nature of blood shed within blood feuds and blood sacrifices is inherently opposed. Therefore, as with Berbeus's maiden, a sacrificial crisis occurs and the "uncontrollable violence" unleashed therein is directly demonstrated by the results of the Dolorous Stroke. The host, his son, Berbeus's maiden, the lady of the castle, Balin, and Pellam are all implicated within and brought down through the maleficent cycle of violence wrought through destructive bloodshed untempered by the neutralizing power of sacrificial blood.

Within the Vulgate Cycle's "The Quest for the Holy Grail," the earliest rendition of the Galahad legend within Arthurian legend, each destructive action within "Balin" is offset by a positive, usually sacrificial action, performed by Galahad. Each of Balin's destructive actions demands a reversal, and so, to create a complete circle, necessitates Galahad's quest and predicts many of his actions within it.

"The Quest for the Holy Grail", like "Balin", is set in motion by an unknown maiden asking assistance from a knight at Arthur's court. From the very beginning, the tale is focused primarily on the Fisher King, and only secondarily on finding the Grail. "Lancelot, in the name of King Pellés, I bid you accompany me into the forest," the maiden says, and takes Lancelot to a nunnery where he knights a youth who the nuns introduce as "all our joy, our comfort and our hope" (Quest 31, 32).[4] Shortly thereafter, the reader is informed twice within a brief amount of text that Galahad is "the Desired Knight, he . . . through whom the enchantments lying on this and other lands are to be loosed," and that "many things have awaited [Galahad's] coming for their fulfillment, both the ridding of this land of its enchantments, and also . . . to bring to conclusion all those things that no other was ever able to resolve" (37, 40). This indicates that not only has the land lain under some kind of harmful blight, but also that Galahad alone can reverse the blight; two points that indicate that the main focus of the "Quest" is not, in fact, finding the Grail, but healing the Fisher King and the land. This task can only be accomplished by equalizing the maleficent blood that originally caused the destruction.

The appearance of a new knight in Arthur's court, Galahad, parallels Balin's newly-awarded knighthood. In fact, shortly after he first appears in Arthur's court, Galahad directly continues Balin's quest by 'winning' the same sword from a stone on the river's edge that Balin pulled from the maiden's sheath.

Whereas "Balin" began with a series of blood feuds, Galahad's very lineage unites the two opposing forces of the Dolorous Stroke, for he is the son of Lancelot, a knight of Arthur's court, and the grandson of the Fisher King, the man to whom Balin dealt the Stroke. The author repeatedly stresses the importance of Galahad's lineage by stating twelve separate times within the first episode of the "Quest" that he is related to both Pellam and Lancelot. Additionally, his lineage and prowess allows Galahad to sit in the Seat of Danger, or Perilous Seige, and so one of Guinevere's handmaidens exclaims that "This feat proves him the one who shall bring the adventures of Britain to their close and restore the Maimed King to health" (39). Yet again, the author focuses upon Galahad as a restorer, one who can reverse the negative events that caused Pellam's downfall.

Throughout his quest, Galahad consistently saves and spares lives where Balin advanced and began blood feuds. As Balin's quest began by dividing Arthur's court — his adopted community — and led to Lanceor's death, Galahad's quest binds the knights in a common purpose and sends them forth to find the Grail, a cup with healing properties. Thus, the overreaching end of Galahad's quest is healing and purification, whereas Balin's was vengeance. To facilitate his overarching goal, throughout the course of the quest Galahad performs or takes part in five sacrificial healing, or containing, acts that directly oppose Balin's five destructive ones.

Whereas the two knights that Balin met, Berbeus and Perin, met their deaths at Garlon's hand, and Balin sought vengeance for their murders, Galahad saves Melias and Perceval, two of the knights he meets, and so allows them to continue their own quests.

Melias falls victim to the lure of a "crown of surpassing beauty," and, while trying to win it, is attacked by a nameless knight who "forced him lance through shield and hauberk into his side and bore him to the ground so fast impaled that the steel and part of the shaft remained embedded in his flank" (67). Galahad finds Melias "seemingly close to death," and defends Melias from further attacks by the nameless knight and the knight's companion, wounding, but not killing them, "having no wish to do . . . greater mischief" (68). Instead, he turns his attention to Melias and takes him to a nearby abbey to be healed. In a further reversal of Balin and Berbeus' encounter, at the abbey

"Galahad withdrew the spike [truncheon] with its splintered wood" from Melias' wound and casts it aside (69). Unlike Balin, who underscores his revenge by taking the very truncheon that Garlon wounded Berbeus with and driving into Garlon's mortal wound, Galahad saves a fellow knight in the same situation, allows the offending knights to live, and rejects any pursuit of vengeance by withdrawing and discarding the wounding weapon. In this fashion, Balin's situation is replayed, but life replaces death, healing replaces vengeance, and violence is halted and contained.

Later on, Galahad comes upon Perceval as Perceval is being attacked by bandits who are "battering and hammering at him so savagely that they would have killed him there and then, for they had already torn off his helm and wounded him" (108). Fortunately, Galahad "was passing by chance that way," and "in a short space of time he had done them [the bandits] such damage by the strength and speed with which he laid about him that there was none so bold as would barter blows with him. Instead they all turned tail and fled" (108). Again, Galahad does not pursue the bandits and kill them, but "When he saw that they had all departed and Perceval had no more to fear from them, he made off into the forest" (108). In another direct reversal from Balin's second encounter with Garlon, Galahad again saves the endangered knight, halts violent bloodshed by sparing the attackers' lives, and balances death with life, which is the penultimate purpose of sacrifice.

Galahad, Perceval, Bors, and Dindraine's,[5] encounter with the blood-letting knights of the lady of the castle is also a direct continuation of "Balin." As in "Balin", the castle knights confront Arthur's knights and demand that they comply "with the custom of the castle," saying "Sir, every maiden who passes this road must fill this dish brimfull with blood from her right arm" (245). Unlike Balin, who forces his female companion to give her blood, Galahad and the others defend Dindraine until night falls and the combat is broken off. The knights of the castle then offer Galahad and the others a truce and hospitality for the night, with the understanding that the combat will resume the next day.

That night, Arthur's knights inquire as to how the custom of the castle was established, and one of the castle knights tells them that the lady of the castle fell ill two years earlier. The knights discovered that their lady had leprosy and began seeking a cure. "Finally," the knight relates, "a wise man told us that if we could obtain a basin filled with the blood of a maiden who was a virgin both and, in intent, still more if she were the daughter of a king and queen . . . and if we anointed our mistress with it she would be speedily cured" (247).

When she hears the lady's plight, Dindraine takes pity upon the castle's mistress, and tells her escort, "Sirs, you see it that this maiden is ill, and that it lies with me to heal her or condemn. . . . In faith, should I die to give her healing, honor would accrue me *and mine*. Indeed I must perform this act, *in part for them, in part also for you*" (248, emphasis mine). Dindraine's words acknowledge the communal implications of a pure sacrifice freely given. As Girard's theory of sacrifice indicates, because violence must run its course, eventually someone has to pay the price to contain and halt it. In this case, Dindraine's sacrifice not only balances the sacrificial crisis initiated by the failure of Berbeus's maiden's forced sacrifice, but also stems the violence that a continuation of Arthur's knights' and the castle knights' battle would unleash. As Girard writes, "Society is seeking to deflect upon a relatively indifferent victim, a 'sacrificeable' victim, the violence that would other wise be vented on its own members" (4). Dindraine meets the specifications of a perfect sacrifice as revealed by Girard's studies: as a virgin, she would be considered "pure" by both the ancient and medieval Celts, as a princess she is a valuable and qualitative sacrifice, and, because she is Perceval's sister and thus connected with Arthur's court, she is a victim outside of the lady of the castle's community. Additionally, Girard writes that a truly perfect victim must "bear resemblance to the object that it replaces, otherwise the violent impulse would remain unsatisfied" (10). Dindraine, like the lady of the castle, is female, of high social rank, and her knights consider her valuable enough to fight and die for. Because of this she is able to, in Girard's terms, attract and contain the destructive violent impulses within herself, and offer healing through her own death. "I am dying so that this lady may have health," Dindraine says and, indeed, "the lady was restored to health that very day. For as soon as she was washed in the blood of the holy maid she was cleansed and healed of leprosy", which directly demonstrates that the sacrifice was successful (249). The health and happiness of the lady's people are restored, the battle is called off, and Galahad, Perceval, and Bors leave the castle without participating in any further violence. Again, the destruction wrought through Balin's companion and quest is neutralized and limited through Galahad's maiden's successful sacrifice, the unnatural violence inspired by the lady of the castle's illness is stopped, Arthur's and the lady of the castle's communities are healed, unified, and balanced through Dindraine's blood.

Before finally reaching the Fisher King's castle, Galahad performs a last healing act that contrasts with and balances Balin's failure to heal his host's son. Galahad is offered hospitality at the abbey where King Mordrain lives and lodges. After he spends the night and attends mass, he goes to the chapel to see the king. "As soon as the knight drew near him, King Mordrain, who by the will of God had long since lost his sight and bodily powers, was able to see plain," and he tells Galahad that Galahad's very presence "made my flesh which was withered and dead . . . young and strong again" (269). Where Balin's host

asked for blood shed in the violence of a blood feud to heal his son, Galahad heals his host through peaceful means, and so is able to reverse the destruction of earlier times. Galahad is able to heal Mordrain because Galahad himself is soon to consummate his role as the ultimate sacrifice and thereby completely overturn the destructive cycle set into motion by Balin. Thus, as a victim even more perfect than Dindraine, he is able to continually draw destructive impulses to himself and so, by the time he dies, Galahad becomes an almost universally balancing force.

As in "Balin", the climax of the "Quest" is dependent upon the welfare of Pellam, the Fisher, or Maimed, King. In a culmination of the destructive forces unleashed by Balin's uncontained blood feuds, Pellam and his kingdom are damaged. After directly balancing each of the maleficent bloodshed enacted through Balin, Galahad is able to complete blood's corresponding beneficent cycle by healing Pellam, then dying himself as the ultimate sacrifice.

After he finds the Grail Castle and receives communion directly from God, the Lord tells Galahad, "since I would not have thee leave this place without the Maimed King's being healed, thou shalt take first some blood of this lance and anoint his leg with it: for this and this alone can bring him back to health" (277). The act of using blood from the very lance that, in Malory's "Balin", was used to wound Pellam to heal him, completes the circle of destruction and rejuvenation. Because Galahad unites Arthur's court – Balin's *de facto* family – and Pellam's family, his person unifies and balances, and so ends, the blood feud between Balin and Pellam. Additionally, Galahad uses blood from the lance that originally wounded Pellam to reunite the blood shed with the blood still in the body, again completing a circle and creating a direct physical balance between the maleficent blood dripping from the lance and the beneficent, life-giving blood in Pellam's body. As Frazer writes of the Celts, "The sympathetic connection supposed to exist between a man and the weapon which has wounded him is probably founded on the notion that the blood on the weapon continues to feel with the blood in his body" (43). Galahad's official conclusion of the blood feud by healing both his relative and his enemy with blood that was shed during the height of the feud is the antithesis of Balin's destructive act, and so, when "Galahad went to the lance . . . touch[ed] the blood with his fingers . . . and anointed his legs with it where the steel had pierced him," "immediately the king put on a gown, and springing hale and sound from his bed, he offered thanks to our Lord . . ." (277).

At this point, each instance of destruction enabled through Balin's bloodshed is balanced by Galahad's healing, sacrificial acts. Yet, just as Balin died, ending the cycle of destruction in a final violent shedding of blood, so Galahad must also perish in a final, ultimate sacrifice. Though he asks for death after

completing his quest and rejuvenating the blighted king and kingdoms, he is instead crowned king of Sarras against his will and, as king, ends the violence and destruction that the kingdom suffered from under the previous king, Escorant, "a cruel and perfidious man" (281).

The last chapter of Galahad's tale demonstrates how the Perfect Knight undergoes a final two years of purification through suffering, first imprisoned by Escorant, and then weighed down by the unasked-for yoke of worldly power, he draws all violence to himself and so becomes the ideal sacrificial scapegoat. As Girard says of sacrifices, "The more critical the situation, the more "precious" the sacrificial victim must be . . . . When no preventive measures are taken, the ultimate sacrifice must be made" (18). In this instance, from Galahad's introduction through his death, he is continually referred to as "the best knight in the world," a "true knight . . . symbol of virginity . . . lily of purity . . . true rose, the flower of strength and healing"; in short, Galahad is the epitome of perfection, and the antithesis of everything that causes violence and destruction (35, 269). Galahad's very willingness to undertake the quest to heal the Wounded King and reverse the enchantments on the kingdoms demands a sacrifice of his every living hour, a sacrifice which utterly completes the cycle of rejuvenation and contains the destructive forces released by Balin. A life that, like Galahad's, was ordained for sacrifice prior even to its conception, must ultimately culminate in death when its tasks are completed. Indeed, Galahad's conception was arranged by King Pellam to ensure Pellam's own healing for, as Malory writes, "the king knew well that Sire Lancelot should get a pusell upon his daughter, which should be called Sir Galahad, the good knight by whom all the foreign country should be brought out of danger" (73-74).

Within the blood circle of destruction and rejuvenation, Balin's life and quest signaled the downward spiral of maleficence prompted by blood feuds and sacrificial crises, which required Galahad's life to balance and contain the violent bloodshed by rejuvenating and healing the destruction wrought through Balin. Thus, blood's dualistic nature and properties reveal a previously unnoted circle that intrinsically links the roots of the first tale of the Grail Quest's commencement with the earlier rendition of its successful conclusion.

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Notes

[1] All Girard quotes are taken from the 1972 edition of Réne Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*, translated by Patrick Gregory, unless otherwise indicated.

[2] In *The Golden Bough* J.G. Frazer studied ancient nature cults that associated the physical condition of the king with the productivity of the land and the fertility of the crops and people. Jessie Weston uses Frazer's basic king-land-fertility hypotheses to relate the legend of the Grail to fertility rites. She links ancient vegetation cults and Celtic rituals, and so argues that the grail saga as a literary outgrowth of ancient ritual, relates a quest to restore fertility to the Fisher King and his kingdom(s).

[3] All Malory quotes are taken from Eugene Vinaver's 1975 edition of *King Arthur & His Knights: Selected Tales by Sir Thomas Malory*, unless otherwise indicated.

[4] All quotes are taken from the Penguin Classics 1969 edition of the Vulgate Cycle's "The Quest of the Holy Grail", translated by P.M. Matarasso, unless otherwise indicated.

[5] Although she is not directly referred to as 'Dindraine' within the "Quest's" text, Perceval's sister is generally called Dindraine or Dindrane in other Grail texts and so, to avoid confusion with the lady of the castle and Berbeus' maiden, I shall refer to her as 'Dindraine' within this paper.

Dr. Roy Hammerling

The Holy Grail Cycle in Malory: A Penance Amidst The Story of Lusty Knights

Introduction

The quest for the Holy Grail and spiritual perfection by the lusty Knights of the Round Table has often puzzled (if not down right perplexed) readers of Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*. Some might wonder, "What has Camelot to do with Jerusalem?" Indeed, early on during the development of the stories of the adventurous knights, church officials and religious writers frequently perceived these tales to be lacking the type of morals that made for a saintly life. Whether it was Lancelot and Guenevere seeking love in an adulterous embrace, Arthur fathering a bastard son through an illicit tryst with his sister, Merlin exercising his magical powers of ambiguous origin, or Gawain accidentally cutting off the head of a woman, the knights of the table round were understood by some religiously-minded folk as bad role models that were in direct competition with the lives of saints for the hearts of medieval Christians.

Long before Malory pulled the myriad of Arthurian stories together into one massive manuscript, the Arthurian legends developed in a variety of diverse writings and lands as individual tales. At the same time, when the Arthurian legends were becoming popular, hagiographical writings painted a very different picture of the noble Arthur. If we simply look at Welsh/Celtic saints lives, for example, we can see this attitude which is reflected elsewhere around Europe. Looking at the Celtic saints stories makes some sense because the areas where these legends were popular would have been well aware of the Arthurian tales and would have had considerable difficulty with parishioners reading and retelling these lusty knight adventures.

The eleventh century *Life of St. Cadoc* (*Vita Cadoci*) tells the story of Arthur, who while gambling (playing dice) with Cei and Bedguir, spies a young girl. Says Lifric of Llancarfan, the author of the text, ". . . Arthur was immediately inflamed with illicit passion for the adolescent girl and, full of wicked thoughts, (he) addressed his companions, 'You should know that I burn with violent desire for that girl . . .'" Fortunately in one of the first (some say "the" first) acts of chivalry in recorded history, Cei and Bedguir chide Arthur saying, "Remove such wicked thoughts from your mind, for we are accustomed to aid those who are weak and defenseless."[1] Likewise, Lifric's *Life of St. Cadoc* portrays Arthur as a depraved, greedy evil rival of a local saint. Arthur even whips the saint and condemns him to 7 years exile unjustly.[2] *The Life of St. Carannog* (*Vita Carantoci* c. 1100?) argues that Arthur was too weak to overcome a dragon terrorizing the land so he has to enlist the help of St. Carannog, who easily

subdues a dragon (a metaphor for the devil).[3] *The Life of St. Padarn* (*Vita Paterni* c. 12th century) shows Arthur to be little more than a local tyrant who jealously desires the garment of a bishop (perhaps a metaphor for a King desiring the power of the church). Padarn, the local bishop refuses Arthur's request and even has the earth open up and swallow up Arthur to the neck until he repents.[4] *The Life of St. Gildas* (*Vitae Gildae*) by Caradoc of Llancarfan (c. 1155) portrays Arthur at the start of his reign as a good ruler, but later he ends up being a tyrant all the same.[5] In all of these instances, a saint is set up as a more virtuous and holy example over and against King Arthur. The legends of Arthur can be seen in these instances to be less than edifying in the eyes of the Welsh church.

It is not hard to see why saints' stories or other holy tales were more to the liking of the Church. Like a popular TV show about sex and/or violence, the Arthurian legends were perceived to send the wrong message, especially according to more religiously-oriented folk. So the spiritually concerned tried to counter the popularity of the Arthurian chivalric way of life with stories that showed Arthur at very least, and often his knights, in a bad light. However, parishioners appear to have been quite fond of listening to the tales of Arthur's adventures nonetheless, and so the open propaganda campaign against the round table legends probably was not very successful. Rigid condemnations and even ridicule of Arthur himself were not enough to dissuade most of the flock from listening to or reading these accounts.[6]

Dante in his fourteenth-century *Inferno* appears to echo an anti-Arthurian sentiment a few centuries later than the Celtic saint's stories. The Florentine poet, in one story that is rooted in an actual historical event, confines Francesca and Paolo to hell for having had a love affair because as they put it, they were inspired by reading the story of Lancelot and Guenevere. As it turns out Paolo was the handsome brother of Francesca's ugly husband, who caught them in an Arthurian-like lovers embrace and ran them both through with a sword, sending them straight off to the second level of hell for eternity.[7]

Even the seventeenth-century John Milton, many years later, decided to write his epic poem *Paradise Lost* about the divine war between God and Satan (and the fall of humans) rather than about earthly wars concerning Arthur and his knights. For Milton the former was about truth and the latter about fables, which lacked edifying elements. Milton writes, "He puts it this way in the text, "Since first this Subject for Heroic Song / Peas'd me long choosing, and beginning late; / Not sedulous by Nature to indite / Wars, hitherto the only Argument / Heroic deem'd, chief maistry to dissect / With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights / In Battles feign'd better fortitude / Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom / Unsung; or to describe Races and Games, / Or tilting Furniture, emblazon'd Shields, / Impreses quaint Caparisons and Steeds; / Bases

and tinsel Trappings, gorgeous Knights / At Joust and Tournament; then marshall'd Feast / Serv'd up in Hall with Sewers, and Seneschals; / The skill of Artifice or Office mean, / Not that which justly gives Heroic name / To Person or to Poem. . ." [8]

We can see from the previous remarks that there clearly was a tension for centuries between those who loved the lusty/bloody legends of the table round and those who preferred reading about the lives of saints. The function of the Holy Grail story, which is clearly much more concerned about "spiritual" matters than the other round table stories, in the Arthurian legends becomes fascinating when considered in this historical context. If we focus simply on Thomas Malory's epic and definitive medieval retelling of the Arthurian stories, then we may wonder, "What role does the spiritual 'quest for the Holy Grail' play within the larger context of Malory's retelling of the lusty and bloody lives of Arthur and his royal knights of the round table?"

I. The Important Context of Malory's Grail Quest

The fifteenth-century author, Thomas Malory, gathered into a single literary work from a number of countries and historical contexts a massive collection of stories about King Arthur and his knights. His achievement in part is that he placed the stories into a coherent order that exhibits a logical sense of progression. One result of this accomplishment was that he essentially put the story of the round table into a sequence that gives a sense of historical development from one legend to the next. There are some internal historical inconsistencies when he does this, but nevertheless the illusion is created of a story that moves from Arthur's birth to his death and even beyond, with an Aristotelian beginning, middle and end. This is important because just as Malory is about to launch into the final chapters of the book, the literal *Le Morte D'Arthur* part of the story (and the collapse of the round table and Arthur's fall and the aftermath) suddenly the story veers off in an unusual direction and into an unlikely set of tales, i.e., the grail quest. Before Malory, the grail tales merely existed as one among many parts of the Arthurian legends; now in Malory's version they have a particularly privileged place within the greater framework of stories, namely before the climactic end of the legend itself.

Malory's placement of the grail story right before the downfall of Camelot is crucial to understanding the function of the story within Malory's grand scheme of collection. The texts that immediately precede the grail stories in Malory appear deliberately to set up the reader for the quest of the Holy Grail. Essentially Malory pulls together three threads of the previous Arthurian stories about the knights in order to set the stage.

First of all, Malory notes that Palomides, the only "Saracen" or Muslim knight, converts to Christianity. In other words, the only non-Christian knight receives baptism and thus the table round is unified in matters of faith and creedal confession (book XII, ch. 14).

Immediately following this event Galahad appears in Camelot and fills the last of the 150 empty chairs of the round table (cf. book XII, ch. 14), i.e., the siege perilous, and therefore there is at least a numerical wholeness in the round table itself for the first time.[9] This is indeed significant because the motif of the siege perilous sets up the idea that the completion of the round table has a mysterious and perhaps even saintly quality to it. This point is further emphasized by the fact that Galahad is the knight who actually achieves the grail! Thus, Galahad's sitting in the siege perilous actually acts as a bridge to the grail quest.

The table round lacks nothing now, fullness fills the hall, and finally, it is inferred that because of these two events (Palomide's conversion and Galahad's filling the perilous seat), that all is well in Arthur's kingdom (the third key element) because unity and peace at last reigns throughout the land. Arthur's enemies are vanquished, and Arthur has the strongest army in the land. This moment is the high point that all the previous stories appear to have been pointing to in some way, or at least this is how Malory retells the story.

Yet, at the very moment when it seems that earthly perfection has been achieved by Arthur's bold chivalrous experiment, the story shifts gears drastically and the knights suddenly are caught up in the only thing left to conquer, namely themselves, and so they embark on a quest for spiritual perfection and the grail. Malory clearly gives the reader a sense of foreboding at this point in the story. The momentary earthly perfection of the table teeters just as all seems to be firmly established, doom looms large, and the table is almost immediately splintered by a sudden and unexpected saintly pursuit of heaven's greatest remnant or relic on earth, the Holy Grail.

The quest to attain the grail is nothing less than the quest for spiritual perfection, a desire to be the worthy of God, or to become a perfect and holy knight. Sadly, such a quest is hopeless from its very outset. As Malory records the story it is Gawain, who in some ways is perhaps the least worthy of the grail, who is the first to take a vow to follow the quest (Book XIII, ch. 8). King Arthur laments, "Alas, ye have nigh slain me with the avow and promise that ye have made; for through you [Gawain] ye have bereft me the fairest fellowship and the truest of knighthood that ever were seen together in any realm of the world; for when they depart from hence I am sure they all shall never meet more

in this world, for they shall die many in the quest."[10] Arthur's words are a gloom that clouds the shiny accomplishments of the table, but still the story must go on.

What is truly remarkable is that Malory's placement of the grail quest at this point in the narrative seems to be promoting the very values that religious critics said were lacking in the previous stories of lusty and violent chivalric knights. The Malory grail tale on the surface advocates medieval Christian values; it does this by changing the very nature and structure of the story in a number of dramatic and powerful ways.

II. The Transformation of the Lusty Legend into a Spiritual Story

The story elements of the quest for the Holy Grail narrative literally change the characterizations, plot, and purpose of the Arthurian story so dramatically that some modern writers who have retold the knights of the round table stories in recent reincarnations simply leave out the grail legend because they basically do not know what to do with it. T.H. White's marvelous retelling of these stories in his *Once and Future King* (published in parts from 1939 to the 1950s) keeps the grail story, but only grudgingly and in a fleeting manner that only has the characters recall what happened in a rapid manner, rather than going through the story in detail. Later on White would collaborate on the musical and movie version of his novel, namely, "Camelot" (which came out on Broadway in 1960, and as a movie in 1967) and in both retellings the grail story is cut out entirely in order to focus more specifically on the love triangle of Arthur, Guenevere, and Lancelot. The 1981 movie "Excalibur" keeps the grail legend, but reinvents it to suggest that the grail serves King Arthur, the land, and political ends (not God or spiritual goals). Despite these accommodations in "Excalibur" critics of the movie at times still argued that this detour into grail territory hinders director John Boorman's retelling of the Arthurian saga. Marion Zimmer Bradley's *Mists of Avalon* (published in 1987) keeps the grail story, but puts it in the context of the conflict between the Druids and Christians. While Bradley's version might seem to follow the original text more closely than the others, her goal is more to talk about how Christianity was intolerant of ancient religions, and thus, her version of the grail story is actually an apologetic against Christianity rather than one for it.

Malory, however, clearly employed the story of the grail to shift the focus away from earthly, lusty, and bloody themes in the Arthurian legends in order to highlight more spiritual and specifically Medieval Roman Catholic Christian concerns. He makes no apologies for this; Malory simply accentuates the already altered key story elements (which were there earlier in previous authors who developed the grail story in the first place) to make the Arthurian legends

sound more like saint's stories, in particular more like Celtic hagiographical literature. To make this point more fully would require another paper. However, as a brief aside it is also interesting to note that many have pointed out that the grail itself in its most ancient form is an old Celtic image that carries over into Christianity.[11]

To better appreciate the function of the grail section in Malory's version of the Arthurian legends, it helps to look closely at the systematic and numerous ways in which the grail story inverts and rejects the basic ideals of the preceding stories. Whether Malory did this consciously or unconsciously is impossible to know; in the end it does not matter. What is important is how the story works in the context of the entire narrative. A close comparison between the lusty and bloody Arthurian legends and the grail tale reveals an almost complete shift in attitude in the story telling. This can be seen in the following ways:[12]

1. The story of the grail in Malory shifts the emphasis from themes dealing with courtly love (i.e., love of lady or lord) to matters focused upon a greater love, namely, a love of the divine. Rather than Gawain trying to find his way into the beds of fair ladies, the oldest of the Orkney boys becomes the first one to say he will seek the grail "twelve-month and a day" if need be (Book XIII, ch. 8). By the way, because of Gawain's weakness for the ladies, it comes as no surprise, that he is also the first one to tire of the grail quest and give up. Like Gawain, Lancelot, who is equally unworthy, nevertheless gives up his sexually-charged encounters with Guenevere in order to win the greatest competition of all, attaining the grail (i.e. a beatific vision of God). Only Arthur appears to know that the spiritual quest is dangerous, and that, many will lose their lives for the sake of their so-called godly/grail pursuits. Arthur knows this because this has already been made amply clear in the earlier narrative: the knights are not worthy in a spiritual sense but are lusty and bloody knights, who often fail to live up even to Arthur's earthly chivalric ideals.

2. The Grail tale as set up by Malory notes that rather than pursuing chivalry, now the knights have set out on a quest for sainthood or at least a different type of chivalry than we've seen before. Most never attain the grail, save Galahad, who is whisked off to heaven shortly after he sees the grail. Indeed, the grail will not be possessed by sinners, but comes only to those who are perfect in heart, mind, body, and spirit. A few others glimpse the grail, but only Galahad achieves it, but by attaining it he despairs of this world and gives up his desire for this world and Camelot itself. Perceval will die just over a year later for the same reason (book XVII, ch. 23).

3. The types of virtues that the knights embodied earlier in *Le Morte D'Arthur* no longer play much of a role in the story. Rather than seeking to

defeat one's enemy and/or offering them mercy if they should ask, now the knights seek to overcome themselves and their earthly desires and they seek the mercy of God. Before, when Lancelot defeated foes, he made them go to Camelot and honor the round table, but now the first knight, who comes in second to his son Galahad and even third to his friend Perceval in the grail quest, seeks only to honor God. Bravery in battle is replaced in the grail stories with having the perseverance to continue the quest. Perhaps the only virtue that remains the same in both cases is the need to defend the poor, needy, and damsels in distress along the way.

4. One key motif of Malory and the Arthurian legends has to do with the fact that the knights are constantly being caught in situations where their vows conflict. One of Malory's stories carried over from Chrétien tells of Lancelot who saves a damsel by defeating a man wishing to do her harm. Defeated the man cries for mercy, which the first knight is bound by honor to grant, but just as he offers it the lady asks of the knight a boon, which he grants. She begs that he cut off the man's head. No matter what Lancelot does he must break his vow to one or the other. Knights in the legends are often confronted with the impossible (or nearly impossible) situations. King Pellinore, on another occasion, in his zeal to pursue a quest Arthur has sent him on, ignores a young woman, who turns out to be his daughter in need, only to find out later she dies because of his neglect. These indeed are flawed knights. But the grail quest demands new virtues, such as valor in Perceval, wisdom for Lancelot, and humility and perseverance for Galahad.[13] In the end, only Galahad succeeds in becoming what all the knights desire, and that is a truly holy knight.

5. The earlier Arthurian stories lift up heroism, physical prowess, and being a champion in battle as laudable accomplishments. In the story of the grail, godliness or holiness is lifted up. Whereas early Malory's texts focus upon the virtues of the strong knight who overcomes evil enemies, heroism in the grail legend focuses upon that thing which the knights, no matter how virtuous, may not attain by any virtue of their own actions. The knights are constantly portrayed in the grail legend as unworthy because of their sins (book XVI, ch. 2; book XVI, chs. 4ff). God grants the grail to whom God chooses, and no manner of valor may attain it. Knights of virtue may prepare themselves by acts of religious virtue (chastity, charity, etc. . .) to be open to the grail, but they cannot wrestle the cup from God's hands. One aspect of the futility of the grail quest is that it can only be undertaken by the humble, but to be humble people cannot be aware of their humility, because this is pride. Yet to go on the quest by its very nature is a paradox - the humble must go, but by going they can't really be humble, because they must at least think that they are worthy of attaining the grail to some small degree.

6. There are an abundance of lusty/bloody stories in the Arthurian tales, but in the grail part of the story, clearly the goal is to turn away from lustier/more violent fare (or what might be considered the problems of the world) and to turn toward a higher love of God and saintly living. The knights give up aimless quests or adventures, which in the past at times ended up in the beds of women, and now they begin directed quests after a specific object, the grail.

7. In the table round stories, knights and ladies dream, swoon, and have visions of their beloved. In the grail legends all the visions are of God, the grail, and that which is worthy of contemplation from a spiritual point of view. The similarity between swooning over a lover and a swooning vision of God, who is love itself, is an interesting point of contrast. The most miraculous event in the grail stories is the appearance of the grail in a vision (247ff). Visions indeed are frequently bursting into the text (e.g. book XV, ch. 3; book XV, ch. 6; book XVI, chs. 1f; book XVI, ch. 8; book XVI, ch. 17; etc. . .).

8. The knights in the earlier stories often go on a quest for adventure not knowing where they are going. They simply ride off knowing that an adventure will eventually occur. Often there is no specific "what" they are seeking or a specific "where" they are going. If they do have a "what" it is often tied to a lady or an ill misfortune that needs correcting. However in the grail story the "what" is clearly defined and specific. In their quest for the grail they seek to attain the holiest relic of them all, in order to be made worthy and become saints, or at least saint-like. They pursue that which is known in a way that is more of a pilgrimage, but which is still beyond their grasp. Where the grail is, remains a mystery, but at least they have an object of their affections to pursue. They may simply hope that the journey itself will help them develop their spiritual characters, but in the end those who do not attain the grail feel that they are failures. Or to put this another way, there seems to be in the pre-grail legends an emphasis on quests that serve the king, and by extension justice, etc. . . In the grail quest the goal is to serve the heavenly King and, in fact, the grail story begins with knights rushing out of the court of their despondent earthly King Arthur, who appears to know he cannot compete with the heavenly King, who now commands the loyalty of his men. In the end, the early adventures reveal the chivalric character of a particular knight, and in the grail story the knight, who goes through some sort of penitential act of self-abasement has his spiritual character revealed (e.g., Galahad is worthy of the grail, while Gawain is not).

9. Rather than being called an adventure (like the stories are in the earlier parts of the legends), the grail quest is often referred to as a dis- or misadventure, something that has become unattainable for all but a few. Some examples of this are: the quest is called misadventure (book XVI, ch. 3), no

adventure (book XVI, ch. 1), or disadventure (book XIII, ch. 20). Also note that visions and sleep, especially dreams, at times become the place where adventures take place (book XVI, ch. 3).

10. The knights try to make the world a better place by belonging to the round table, but in the grail stories they seek to make themselves better people through their spiritual quests. One could argue that in the end the improvement of self really improves the world, but the previous point is still valid even if we allow for this addition to the explanation. The knights, while pursuing the grail, spend a great deal of time in confession, which seems as important or more important than the adventure they are chasing (book XVI, ch. 6). On this earth, sinners are unable to even look upon the object of their highest desire, the grail (book XIII, ch. 8;, book XVI, chs. 4ff).

11. The knights seek to make a name for themselves by doing amazing deeds (e.g. in Chrétien and Malory's Lancelot crosses the sword bridge with his bare feet), but in the grail stories the emphasis is upon seeking to accomplish miracles, which ultimately come via the hand of God. On this earth, sinners are unable to even look upon the object of their highest desire, the grail (book XIII, ch. 8; book XVI, chs. 4ff), and only the pure one may attain it.

12. The stories of the knights of the round table often take place in fields, forests, castles, etc. . . while in the story of the Holy Grail the action frequently occurs in monasteries, hermitages, churches, church cemeteries, etc. . . Whereas in most texts the miraculous has to do with feats of arms and deeds of valor, in the grail the miraculous has to do with relics and that which would be considered spiritual rather than chivalric.

13. Even the modes of transportation change from horses, carts, or walking in Malory's early collection of tales to using ships a good deal (a frequent mode of transportation in Celtic hagiographical texts that the saints used) in the grail story. Symbolically the ship often stood for the church in the middle ages (as an aside, even the main part of the church is called a "nave"), and hence when a group of knights jump in a ship without care for where it may take them this is analogous to reliance upon the church (book XIV, chs. 7-10; book XVII, ch. 2; book XVII, chs. 7-8; book XVII, chs. 12-13).

14. Early on the actions of knights say something about their characters (for example, see the story of Sir Gareth), but in the grail stories the actions of a knight are often meant to be interpreted in a symbolic manner (for example, when Sir Galahad happens to kill a man, the reader is told by a priest in the narrative not to simply assume that Galahad is a murderer. Rather Sir Galahad's action does not make him evil, but reveals that the man he killed was actually a very wicked person

and hence Galahad's act was more akin to almsgiving than murder (book XXII, ch. 18). Religious symbolism can be found in a variety of places. For example, years often have symbolic value like the year 454 AD/CE (book XIII, chs. 2, 7). The first person to develop a calendar revolving around the birth of Jesus was the monk Dionysius Exiguus around 500 CE. The marking of the year 454 has symbolic meaning rather than historical import. We are told Galahad is the 9th generation from the time of Christ's passion. Generations were considered to be between 40-50 years, and hence this symbolic time fits about 9 generations. The number 9 is significant throughout the legends (9 great and worthy rulers, one of which is Arthur, cf. Caxton's preface to his edition of *Le Morte D'Arthur*). This generally goes back to the idea that 9 is 3 times 3, or a trinity of trinities, an especially holy number. As you can see, 454 may be symbolic as well with 9 imagery (4 + 5 and 5 + 4). In any case, the time refers more to the perfect time for when the grail should be found, during the time of the 9th generation, rather than an historical date. The filling of bowls of blood suggests salvation through the blood of Christ (book XVII, ch. 15) and may well be Eucharistic in their symbolism referring to the cup of the Lord's Supper. Even simple actions, like Lancelot falling from his horse, suggest the spiritual meaning of Lancelot falling in pride (book XVI, ch. 4). Whether it is an action or not, it is interesting to note that when the grail does appear, sinners can't see it, that is they are blind to its spiritual truth (book XIII, ch. 8; book XVI, ch. 5). An important and powerful grail image is the notion of the wasteland. The idea that the land has become a wasteland as the people or king spiritually waste away as some seek the grail (book XVII ch. 3) is one of the more enduring symbolic images in modern Arthurian stories. For example, the movie "Excalibur" makes the wasteland its central metaphor (albeit there a more earthly rather than heavenly image). The grail itself clearly points to the religious act of the Eucharist, in which the bread and wine of the worship sacrifice are the body and blood of Christ. An obvious analogy at this point would be to suggest that in the shedding of his blood on the cross, Christ turns the wasteland of sin, death, and this life into a place of hope and heaven. Medieval imagery, and later art work as well, often depict the cross scene as a wasteland and often the chalice is there in the picture, sometimes literally receiving the blood of Christ directly from his side. Such wasteland imagery is prevalent throughout the grail story.

15. When the Arthurian stories speak of a wonderful land they mean Camelot, but when the grail story speaks of a joyous land, it means heaven. In fact, when the earth is referred to in the grail quest, it is often called a wasteland as has been noted. Biblical motifs of the desert (Moses wanders in the desert, the Israelites survive in the desert 40 years, John the Baptist lives in the desert, and even Jesus starts his ministry with 40 days in the desert) are echoed in this device. In the end, to attain the grail means a sudden loss of love of this earth or even Arthur's court: Galahad's only desire once he sees the grail is to leave the earth and abandon life in this wasteland world for the lush garden of heaven (book XVII, ch. 21).

16. The knights of the round table stories view life in a fairly straightforward and literal manner, whereas the grail story takes on a sacramental quality. The grail represents, like Christ himself, an incarnation of sorts, i.e. heaven comes down to earth in the form of the grail to dwell among the warrior knights and give them peace.

Indeed, the way one was supposed to interpret spiritual texts during the middle ages was different than how one was to read literary stories. Dante caused a scandal when he suggested that his *Comedia* could be interpreted in the same way the bible was meant to be interpreted. Henri De Lubac's monumental *Medieval Exegesis,* which explains the fourfold method of biblical interpretation in the middle ages, suggests four ways of viewing the scriptures, namely, 1. literal, 2. allegorical/spiritual, 3. moral/tropological, 4. anagogical/ eschatological. The classic illustration of how this works is given by the fifth-century monk, John Cassian, who applies these four methods to the biblical city of Jerusalem in the following manner: 1. Literally Jerusalem is a city in the land called Israel that sits on a hill. 2. Spiritually the city of Jerusalem represents the church. 3. Morally the city of Jerusalem reminds people that they are to be examples to the world because of their faithfulness in God. Like Jerusalem, which is set on a hill, Christians are to be visible to all in their upright behavior. 4. Eschatologically speaking Jerusalem is heaven or what Christians should aspire to; indeed the book of Revelations suggests that in the last days Jerusalem will be heaven (see Cassian's *Conferences* 14:8). The scandal concerning Dante was that he suggested a literary text could be read with the same fourfold interpretive method of the bible. It appears that in Malory the Holy Grail story can also be interpreted with the fourfold biblical methodology. I know of no scandal in Malory's day concerning this, but then again, Dante lived in the 14th century and Malory over a hundred years later, when people were at least more accustomed to reading the *Comedia* in a biblical way and other literary texts as well.

Conclusion

So what is the purpose of the Holy Grail story in Malory? Or to ask the question another way, "For Malory, whom does the grail serve?" The question appears to have a number of answers. First of all, the grail silences the religious critics, or at the very least it takes away their strongest arguments, namely that the Arthurian stories have no spiritual value to them. Second, the quest for the Holy Grail in Malory essentially also functions as a penance of sorts for the earlier lustier tales about the knights of the round table. As the reader will recall, Malory interjects in a few places in the story that he himself is in prison and so he asks the reader to pray for him. The suggestion may be that there is some sin (or sins) he is doing penance for in prison. Perhaps Malory

understands the criticisms concerning the early Arthurian tales, and even though he clearly loves them, he nevertheless himself wants to redeem them. By placing the grail story where he does and by shifting the entire emphasis of the overall story, Malory succeeds in silencing his critics and perhaps in redeeming the story for those who are skeptical of it. The grail is the element of the Arthurian story that gets the more conservatively-minded religious folk off the Arthurian legend's back so to speak. Sure the early stories are about lusty and bloody knights, but by shifting the focus of the story so dramatically, and by placing the grail quest right before Arthur's death, the grail story helps to make the entire Arthuriad more palatable to a broader audience, especially more heavenly-minded individuals. Likewise, those who don't like the spiritual shift are also forced to do a penance of sorts when they read the stories that they don't like in order to get to the end of the entire tale. Undoubtedly this worked for some, but not for others. But at least in Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* no one can say that these stories don't at least address the problem of living a godly life.[14]

Evidence for the above conclusion ultimately appears in Malory's text immediately following the grail tale (book XVIII, chapter 1) where Malory writes. . .

> So after the quest for the Sangrail was fulfilled, and all the knights that were left aliver were comen again unto the Table Round, as the Book of the Sangrail maketh mention, then was there great joy in the court; and in especial King Arthur and Queen Guenevere made great joy of the remnant that ere comen home. . . Then the book saith, Sir Launcelot began to resort unto Queen Geuenever again, and forgat the promise and the perfection that he made in the quest. For, as the book saith, . . . so they loved together more hotter than they did toforehand, and had such privy draughts together, that many in the court spake of it.

Notice how the tone here suggests that Malory indeed had interrupted the earlier Arthurian legends with the grail quest, but now he plans on getting back to the old themes with a vengeance. Malory appears to feel the need to explain why he is returning to the more original Arthurian narrative. In fact, he returns to it with even more vigor than he left it earlier. Lancelot and Guenevere's love affair will now begin to really catch fire, almost literally for Guenevere. Arthur and Mordred fight to their bloody deaths. The land is laid waste. But in the end, the religious can't complain that the story ignored higher values. Indeed it doesn't. Not only is the grail quest a spiritually focused story, but when Malory's version seems to come to a logical conclusion, Arthur being carried off either dead or near dead, it still doesn't end. After Arthur dies and/or goes off to Avalon to be healed, and so forth, suddenly Malroy keeps the story going by relating how

Lancelot and Guenevere meet one last time, not to run off together, but to go off to separate monasteries. The end lingers with grail-like themes. Penance has been done in the grail story, and indeed in the drawn-out ending, Malory's version returns to grail themes and thus the entire corpus is sufficiently contrite (at least for most Christians, save the most extreme and rigid in their views). To this day, who among us doesn't search for our own Holy Grail, perhaps seeking to add a tinge of penance and holiness to our own existences in order to justify them properly. We love the lusty bloody stories of our day, but if we can find one story with a true or deeper meaning for our lives, then perhaps we too are not as bad as we think we are. Perhaps, we too want to reinterpret the grail in our modern context for our own heavenly purposes, namely to do penance for our own lusty/bloody delights? Either way, penance is necessary, and Malory's telling of the Arthurian stories remains in history one of the most pliable, popular, and dare we say "spiritual" stories of all time.

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Appendix 1

Malory's Set Up of the Quest for the Holy Grail

1. The Conversion of the Muslim Palomides to Christianity
2. Galahad sits in the Seige Perilous (The Round Table is complete at last – 150 Knights)
3. Arthur's Chivalrous experiment has succeeded, for the moment at least.

Key Themes in Malory's Non-Grail Stories	Key themes in Malory's Grail Stories
1. Courtly Love	1. Divine Love
2. Chivalry	2. Sainthood
3. Virtues mercy to those who ask honor for the Round Table bravery protect poor, needy, & damsels	3. Virtues seek God's mercy honor for God fidelity to God protect poor, needy, & damsels

4. Flawed Knights Conflicting Vows: Medieval Catch 22's	4. Perfect Knights (Etienne Gilson thesis: Knight's Templar virtues)
Pellinore's Daughter dies due to his neglect.	Perceval Valor Lancelot Wisdom Galahad Virtue/Humility/ Perseverance
5. Heroism in physical prowess: Champion	5. Heroism in godliness: Holiness
6. Lusty/bloody Stories	6. Saintly Stories
7. Visions of lover	7. Visions of God (Beatific)
8. Quests for Adventure Quest for unknown to serve King Questing to unknown place Reveals Knightly Character	8. Quest for Salvation Quest for Grail to serve God, the King Arthur Pilgrimage to find Grail, unknown place Penance: Spiritual Character Revealed
9. Adventure	9. Disadventure/Misadventure
10. Warrior who makes world a better place	10. Warrior who seeks to make himself a better person (confession)
11. The Amazing Deed	11. The Miraculous Deed
12. Places of action: fields, forest, castles	12. Places of Action: monasteries, hermitage, churches
13. Transportation horses, carts, walk	13. Transportation horses, ships, etc. . .
14. Actions reveal Character Sir Gareth Story Reveals character flaws and points out appropriate behavior without consequence	14. Actions symbolic Galahad kills someone but is told by priest that his act is really an alms because the person was wicked

15. Real Land: Camelot	15. Symbolic Land: Heaven
16. Literal view of life	16. Sacramental view of life

For more on this see Henri De Lubac's monumental *Medieval Exegesis* which explains the fourfold method of interpretation, i.e. 1. literal, 2. allegorical/spiritual, 3. moral/tropological, 4. eschatological

Notes

[1] Richard White, ed., *King Arthur in Legend and History* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 14. NB: The book and chapter references in the *Le Morte D'Arthur* edition hereafter refer to Caxton's edition.

[2] White, *King Arthur in Legend and History*, pp. 15f.

[3] White, *King Arthur in Legend and History*, pp. 16f.

[4] White, *King Arthur in Legend and History*, p. 18.

[5] White, *King Arthur in Legend and History*, p. 19ff.

[6] As an aside, this is not unlike modern tendencies among some Christian/religious groups today who see stories presented in films about modern violent or sexy anti-heroes For example, the anti-heroes of movies like those portrayed in "Pulp Fiction," "Bonnie and Clyde," "Sin City," or some modern horror movies are seen by some conservative religious groups as the tales propagated by the devil himself. Some fundamentalist modern Christians have even tried to compete with the more violent stories by creating video games and superheroes with names like "Bibleman." They have even started providing mildly violent films with strong religious themes like "The Left Behind" series as an alternative to other types of films. So far the appeal of "Bibleman" who quotes just the right scripture to overcome his enemies, has been very limited. However, the "Left Behind" series has made millions of dollars and has been seen by millions as well, although in recent years even its popularity has faded somewhat.

[7] Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 5.

[8] John Milton, *Paradise Lost,* Book IX, lines 25-47 in *Complete Poems and Major Prose* (Indianapolis: Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 379. I'm deeply indebted to Dr. David Sprunger of Concordia College for this reference and conversations and helpful guidance in writing this entire article. Any errors herein are mine, and anything good due to his helpful and careful suggestions.

[9] Perhaps the completeness of the number 150 can be found in the fact that there are 150 Psalms in the bible.

[10] Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, vol. 2 (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 248.

[11] For more on how the Grail legend is similar to Celtic hagiography see point 13 in the following section of this paper.

[12] At the end of this paper the reader will find Appendix 1, which attempts to summarize the following points in an abbreviated format. Some instructors might find such an appendix useful.

[13] Etienne Gilson has suggested that these virtues reflect the values of the Knights Templar.

[14] A few modern comparisons might be useful at this point. First of all, some evangelical Christians that I know felt that the Matrix films, which are laden with Christian (and for that matter other religious) symbolism, are better than other similar violent and lusty films because of the obvious religious symbolism. Despite the violence and sexual themes, the subject matter of Neo resurrecting from the dead and being a savior of sorts (all be it a superhero "kick-ass" sort of Jesus), redeems the film for some Christians. Similarly these people would not hesitate to condemn films that are similar (or even have less violence and sex) but do not have Christian elements.

Another contrast may be useful to make a second point. A conservative Christian friend of mine once said to me of a movie that we had watched together that, "That was an okay film with some spiritual meaning to it, but I just wish that they hadn't added all that swearing, sex, and violence." Ironically, the movie was "Schindler's List" (the Oscar winner for best picture in 1993). I had a similar experience with the Academy award winning best picture film of 1984 "Amadeus." In other words, some people probably will never be able to see the value of profoundly religious films beyond any content that they find offensive no matter how good the film is. Still some will be able to, such as my Matrix loving friend.

Finally, there is the type of film goer who likes a movie like "The Passion of the Christ" not for its spiritual content, but for the graphic violence and special affects. They put up with the film's spiritual meaning only because the movie has a good story that is told well. As one friend of mine said, "'The Passion of the Christ' had that "Braveheart"-like quality ("Braveheart" won the Oscar for best picture in 1995) that makes a picture great." Granted this last example is extremely rare in my experience. Nevertheless, I offer these examples because they might offer some insight into the type of readers Malory may have had.

Sharon M. Hekman

Lactation Rhetoric, Religion, and *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie* (1622)

Before the invention of manufactured infant formula, hired wet nurses played a significant role in providing nutrition for infants whose mothers were unable or unwilling to breastfeed. In the seventeenth century, most upper-class English mothers considered breastfeeding an inconvenient and degrading practice, hiring lower-class wet nurses from the countryside by the thousands to suckle their infants (McClaren 426; Stone 107). Medical historian David Harley reports that "[i]t is extremely difficult to find High Church or Catholic gentlewomen who breast-fed their own children during the seventeenth century, except in cases of necessity" (201). One of the main obstacles to maternal breastfeeding was the widely-held Galenic theory that sexual intercourse corrupts breast milk. To avoid corrupting their breast milk, lactating women often were expected to be celibate. For Roman Catholics, this enforced celibacy of the maternal breastfeeding period was seen as an obstacle to the procreative purpose of marriage, so the church officially condoned hired wet-nursing as a way to quickly re-establish the procreative relationship between husband and wife (McClaren 27). Regarding the Anglican Church, both Patricia Crawford and David Cressy point out that its clergy was more interested in the rituals associated with childbirth (such as christenings, churching ceremonies for returning mothers, and funerals for deceased infants and mothers) than in commenting on breastfeeding practices.

However, over the course of the century the practice of wet-nursing came under increasing attack in England as the revolutionary spirit of the Protestant Reformation and the rise of Puritanism led to a grassroots movement aimed at reforming not only religious and political life, but family life as well. Domestic advice treatises, sermons, and tracts in which women were exhorted to breastfeed became part of the discourse on pious family life, a discourse which burgeoned as Puritans sought to bring all of life under the control of a sovereign and orderly God. As an aristocratic Puritan and the mother of eighteen children, Elizabeth Clinton, the dowager Countess of Lincoln, was at the center of this controversy. Her 1622 treatise, *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie*, is the only known work devoted to the subject of lactation to be authored by a woman in the seventeenth century (McPherson ii). Clinton took up the pen later in life in support of her daughter-in-law, who had made the unfashionable choice to breastfeed her own infants. Although generally characterized as a "mother's advice book" or regarded as part of the broader genre of the religiously-based household domestic advice treatise, Clinton's treatise stands apart because of its consistent use of religious arguments and imagery.

In the introduction to her critical, online edition of *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie*, Kate McPherson summarizes the main voices in the "rancorous debate" about breastfeeding in seventeenth century England. Medical authorities (such as Ambrose Paré, Jacques Gillemeau, Nicholas Culpepper, and Jane Sharp) all strongly recommended maternal breastfeeding, as did Puritan moralists such as Perkins, Gouge, and Cleaver and Dod (iii, vii). McPherson acknowledges historian Lawrence Stone's important work in highlighting the social arguments used by Puritan anti-wet-nursing moralists, but points out that Stone "neglects any exploration of the religious motivation for their concern" (vii). McPherson further complains that twentieth-century historians such as Antonia Fraser have not credited Elizabeth Clinton with addressing the larger socio-religious debates of the seventeenth century. Fraser, says McPherson, "believes that Clinton wrote her tract merely because she, like so many other women, had encountered neglectful nurses and wanted to prevent any further loss of life; she elides Clinton's intense religious motivation and the preaching it inspired" (ix). Fraser's view exemplifies the current critical view of Clinton's treatise as an early example of maternal breastfeeding advocacy and/or a work of proto-feminism. Following McPherson's lead, however, my argument is that, far from being another mother's advice book, the *Nurserie* should be read as a sophisticated Puritan moralist tract that fully reflects the era's Calvinist reasoning while promoting a distinctly Puritan practice of meditation.

Clinton's Calvinism is reflected in three major points: the conviction that humans live in an ordered universe ruled by a providential Creator, the idea that the proper response to this providential God is gratitude, love, and obedience; and the linkage of this gratitude with Christian duty and submission to the will of God in all aspects of life. First, Elizabeth Clinton appeals to the concept of the ordered universe by arguing that maternal breastfeeding is part of God's providential design in creation. She writes,

> Now another worke of God, proving this point is the worke of his provision, for every kinde to be apt, and able to nourish their own fruit: there is no beast that feeds their young with milk, but the Lord, even from the first ground of the order of nature, Growe and multiplie, hath provided it of milke to suckle their own young, [here Clinton also argues that mothers in the animal kingdom nurse their own offspring, not those of others] by their own breasts, not to bring forth by one Damme, and to bring up by another: but it is his ordinance that every kinde should bring forth and also nourish its own fruit. (11)

Maternal breastfeeding, then, is an orderly God's provision for feeding the young of every species in its turn, an unwritten rule that even the beasts understand and obey. Consequently, for Clinton, the practice of wet nursing overturns the natural order, rejecting God's providence in favor of an unnatural perversion of God's creative design. Clinton writes, "Oh consider, how comes our milk? is it not by the direct providence of God?...The Mothers then that refuse to nurse their own children, doe they not despise Gods providence?" (12). God's providential order in creation demands women's cooperation; they are blessed by it, but also constrained by it. Says Clinton,
"this worke of his provision sheweth that hee tieth us likewise to nourish the children of our owne wombe, with our owne breasts even by the order of nature" (12). Sending one's child out for wet nursing (except in cases of inability to nurse on the part of the mother), Clinton argues, is a rejection of the constraint of natural order—a "monstrous unnaturalnesse" and a "sinne" (Clinton 12, 13).

The importance of the concept of the ordered creation in the *Nurserie* is evidenced by the number of times Clinton uses the related words order, disorder, ordained, and ordinance. In this short treatise, she invokes these four words no less than fifteen times. The word ordinance deserves special attention, in fact, because she mentions it nine times—more than twice the number of times she uses any one of the other related words. In a seventeenth century religious context, ordinance would have meant, "that which is ordained or decreed by God, a god, or fate; a dispensation, decree, or appointment of God, providence, or destiny" (OED). Thus, when Clinton argues that it is "his [God's] ordinance for mother to give their children suck," she is implying that her argument carries the force of a divine imperative. Maternal breastfeeding is not just a good idea; it's the law. Rhetorically, Clinton's employment of this trope is the ultimate ethical appeal to authority, and the frequency with which she uses it hammers home her point. She intends to underscore the idea that the question of whether to breastfeed is not just a social or medical decision, but rather one in which mothers risk defying the decrees of God himself. She concludes by stating, "in giving them milke for it [breastfeeding], [God] doth plainly tell them that he requires it" (12).

Clinton's injunction here reflects Puritan teachings regarding the perfection of creation and the human body as designed and ordained by God. Puritan thought regarded natural creation as the direct expression of the one of the key attributes of God: his goodness. An extension of a good god, the world was created good and it is only through the fall into sin that nature became corrupted. William Perkins, perhaps the most influential Puritan thinker of the era, affirms the Edenic perfection of God's design concerning the human body. He asserts, "the decency and dignity of the body in which, though naked, nothing was unseemly,

so was there in it imprinted a princely majesty" (188). Perkins further states that "[t]he goodness of the creature is a kind of excellency by which it was void of all defect, whether punishment or fault" (186). What Clinton does is to translate this general principle—that of God's perfect design of the human body—into the sphere of the feminine. For Clinton, God's design of the female body, with its obvious provision for the production of milk, means that his original intent for women's breasts was that they were to be used for feeding infants. Therefore, she concludes, any woman who refuses to use her breasts in the manner for which they were designed flouts God's will concerning the use of her body.

At this point, Clinton has set the stage for her next Calvinist argument in favor of maternal breastfeeding. Once she has established that maternal breastfeeding is commanded by God, she can logically argue that women should obey this command out of a sense of gratitude to God, to whom they are eternally indebted for the gift of salvation. This argument follows the steps of the Calvinist tripartite sequencing of salvation history: guilt, grace, gratitude. In Calvinist theology, sin-guilt is expiated through God's loving grace, which leads to a sense of gratitude. Gratitude on the part of the sinner then leads to the desire to obey and please God. As Calvin expresses it, once someone has tasted of God's "paternal love," he will be "allured to reverence Him [God]" and will "voluntarily and willingly devote himself to the service of God" (53). In this religious context, Clinton is able to express a sense of moral outrage whose source would have been well understood by her audience. Mothers who disobey God's natural order are shortchanging God. Refusal to breastfeed their infants according to God's perfect design is ungrateful disobedience. Disobedience in the face of such generosity is tantamount to blasphemy and leads Clinton to cry indignantly, "Oh impious, and impudent unthankfullnesse; yea monstrous unnaturalnesse, both to their own natural fruit borne so near their breasts, and fed in their owne wombs, and yet may not be suffered to sucke their owne milke" (12). In this cry she echoes Calvin's exhortations against "the shameful ingratitude of men" who would pridefully resist acknowledging their subordination to God (53). Again, Clinton takes orthodox Calvinistic Puritan thought and customizes it to apply to the female as subject.

Clinton's clever use of the verb "suffered" here ("suffered to sucke their owne milke") also subtly implies a certain callousness on the part of these mothers who seemingly cannot. be bothered with their own offspring. This callousness begins with their ingratitude to God and ends with indifference to their own infants. Of course, indifference was not an acceptable stance toward God—or anything—in the Puritan mindset. Puritans rejected lukewarm or half-hearted religion; indeed, zeal and fervor were hallmarks of their politics as well as their worship. Perkins describes this zeal as "an hungering and thirsting...A serious

desire to believe and endeavor to obtain God's favour" (229-230). As a Puritan, Clinton reflects this zeal in her disdain of women who are "so coy, so nice, so lukewarme" in their faith that they skip church when the weather is bad, taking "no paines to nourish their own soules" (18). "Alas," sighs Clinton, "no marvell if these will not bee at trouble, and paine, to nourish their childrens bodies" (18). Love for God and love for infant are intertwined, and Clinton advocates passion in both relationships.

The third distinctly Puritan hallmark of Clinton's prose is her frequent reference to Christian, moral, and maternal duty. For Puritans, the concept of duty, especially as articulated in Ecclesiastes 12:13, encapsulated the essence of the Christian life—which is to obey the will of God and perform the "whole duty of man." It follows, then, that the burning question became, "what is the whole duty of man?" Several Calvinist catechisms attempted to answer this question, including the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (1647), and the lesser-known Keach's Catechism (1677). Richard Allestree's popular *The Whole Duty of Man* (1648) was probably the most influential book in English on the topic, but Jeremy Taylor (1660) also published a book on the subject, as did others. Perkins, for his part, taught that part of 'the whole duty of man' was to attend worship services (315) and read the bible (323). In fact, the phrase became so ubiquitous that the end of the century saw the publication of a treatise that was playfully entitled, *The Whole Duty of a Woman* (Anonymous, 1696). *The Belgic Confession* (1561) includes the comprehensive injunction to keep in mind that "When you have done all that is commanded you, then you shall say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have done what it was our duty to do.'" (*Psalter* 841).

The Countess of Lincolnes Nurserie, reflecting this early Calvinist preoccupation with a sense of duty, includes the word duty on almost every page—a total of fifteen references in a nineteen-page treatise. Such repetition indicates the crucial role duty plays in Clinton's argument. Indeed, it may be the rhetorical heart of her argument, as evidenced by her own thesis statement at the outset: "I thought good to open my mind concerning a speciall matter belonging to all childe-bearing women, seriously to consider of:...in sume, the matter I mean, Is the duty of nursing due by mothers to their owne children" (6). Clinton never abandons her thesis or wanders off track. Throughout the document she tattoos the word duty over and over—fifteen times, in fact, in different contexts, but always with the same purpose: to reinforce the central idea that maternal breastfeeding is a woman's obligation—to her children, to her "motherly office," and to God and his ordinances (16).

Another manifestation of Clinton's conception of maternal breastfeeding as a holy duty can be seen in her reference to breastfeeding as a type of "worke"

(19). For Clinton, maternal breastfeeding is not an idle pastime—it is a job, or a "calling"—an important concept in Puritan thought. Puritans taught that every man had a preordained vocation to which God had called him in order to further the common good. It was up to each individual man to discover his calling—law, the church, carpentry, farming, or medicine—but whatever calling the man pursued, he must "do the duties of his calling with diligence" (Perkins 450). In "A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men," William Perkins warns that

> Sloth and negligence in the duties of our callings are a disorder against that comely order which God hath set in the societies of mankind, both in church and commonwealth. And, indeed, idleness and sloth are the causes of many damnable sins. The idle body and the idle brain is the shop of the devil. (451)

In giving the activity of breastfeeding the label of "duty" and "worke," Clinton borrows the familiar Puritan male-marked theological rhetoric and re-positions it in the female realm. Breastfeeding becomes a calling just like male occupations, and Clinton implies that the same diligence and care that men take with their careers should be applied to the female occupation of suckling an infant. Negligence is no more acceptable in the motherly occupation of breastfeeding than it would be in typically male occupations.

"A Fit Occasion": The *Nurserie* and the Puritan Art of Occasional Meditation

The rhetoric of Elizabeth Clinton's argumentation in support of maternal breastfeeding is not the only textual element to reflect her curious blend of female rhetoric and deep-seated Puritan Calvinism; the unusual exhortation at the conclusion of her treatise reflects her Puritanism as well. Addressing her audience of prospective nursing mothers at the end of her arguments, she leaves them with this recommendation:

> If you be satisfied [persuaded]; then take this with you, to make you do it [breastfeed] cheerfully. Thinke always, having the child at your breast, and having it in your arms, you have *Gods blessing* there. For children are Gods blessings. Thinke againe how your Babe crying for your breast, sucking hartily the milke out of it, and growing by it, is the *Lords owne instruction*, every hour, and every day, that you are sucking it, instructing you to shew that you are his *new borne Babes*, and by your earnest desire after his word, & the sincere doctrine thereof, and by your daily growing in grace and goodnesse thereby, so shall you reape pleasure, and profit. Againe, you may consider, that when your childe is at your breast, it is a fit occasion to move your heart to pray for a blessing on that worke; and to give thanks for your child, and ability & freedom unto that. (19)

This exhortation, I argue, is a call to an occasional meditation according to the conventions of Puritan devotional practices. In his chapter on Richard Baxter in *The Poetry of Meditation*, Louis Martz bases a discussion of the problematic issue of Calvinist devotional practices on Baxter's important 1650 critique of the neglect of religious meditation among the Puritans. However, Barbara Lewalski and Norman Grabo have since demonstrated that, although the Puritan publishing frenzy on the art of meditation didn't reach its zenith until the second half of the century, early seventeenth century Puritans certainly did practice and value meditation (cf. Bishop Joseph Hall's 1606 *Art of Divine Meditation*, Thomas Taylor's 1629 *Meditations from the Creatures*, and Thomas Hooker's 1632 *The Soules Preparation for Christ*).

According to Lewalski, these earlier Protestants applied emblematic patterns to their life situations and meditated on experiences rather than on the formal, set topics described by Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Writing later in the century, Edward Calamy describes this distinctively Puritan style of meditation as consisting of two varieties: the occasional meditation and the deliberate. In the case of occasional meditation, the believer takes an earthly experience or some sensory impression—something he hears or sees or smells or touches—and uses it to "raise up his thoughts to Heavenly meditation"; the physical thing he sees or hears here on earth then becomes "as a ladder to climb to Heaven" (10).

Seen in this light, Clinton's exhortation can be read as a "how-to" instruction concerning the performance of the occasional meditation. She suggests that the nursing mother, each time she physically holds her child in her arms as it nurses, should raise up her thoughts to a heavenly meditation on her own spiritual likeness to that infant, pondering the idea that she should be earnestly desiring and seeking after God's word in the same way that her eager infant seeks out the nipple. As in Loyola's spiritual exercises, Clinton uses intense visual/somatic imagery to set up the meditation prompt, urging the mother to "Thinke again how your Babe cr[ies] for your breast, sucking heartily the milk" (19). This primal, sensual, quasi-sexual bodily experience is "the Lords owne instruction" and it becomes a powerful tool to illustrate the otherwise abstract idea of the believer's dependence on and desire for intimacy with God (19). A century later Edward Taylor would use this same subject matter for meditation, envisioning himself as the helpless infant hanging on the nipples of the Word of God. He writes, "Lord put these nipples then my mouth into/And suckle therewith I humbly pray/Then with this milk, thy Spiritual babe I'st grow" (Canticle 7.3).

An even more convincing connection of this exhortation to the Puritan occasional meditation is the language Clinton uses to describe this exercise itself. "You may consider," she writes, "that when your child is at your breast, it

is a fit occasion to move your heart to pray for a blessing on that worke" (19). The phrase "a fit occasion," I think, is more than mere coincidence—it is an oblique reference to the type of meditation she is promoting. Further, Clinton suggests that the meditating mother engage in two distinct spiritual activities after she has completed contemplation on her identity as a spiritual suckling: first, the mother should "pray for a blessing" on her breastfeeding endeavor and second, the mother should "give thanks" that she is able to breastfeed. These two actions, although both prayers, nevertheless are separate actions: the former is petition and the latter is thanksgiving. Thus understood, it becomes apparent that the whole meditation has a clear three-part structure. The first part consists of a contemplation that seeks to emphasize and increase the believer's intimacy with God; the second part, petition, invites requests to this nurturing God; and the third part, thanksgiving, requires from the believer an offering, giving something back to God. This structure, importantly, echoes the basic structure of Christian worship, a similarity that would not have been lost on Clinton's early seventeenth century audience. Thus, the act of breastfeeding becomes not just a holy occupation, but an act of worship as well.

Clinton would not have been remiss, according to accepted Puritan thought, in instructing women to look to their own experiences to further their understanding of God. A certain self-awareness and meditative spirit was necessary, of course, to have the proper penitential spirit, but the Puritans also taught that self-searching and meditation were essential parts of coming to a knowledge of God. Says Perkins, "Blessed life ariseth from the knowledge of God and therefore it ariseth likewise from the knowledge of ourselves, because we know God by looking into ourselves" (177).

That Elizabeth Clinton was fully literate in the practice of piety and meditation is almost certain, although no written record of her life exists to confirm this assumption. However, female members of her class and rank had ample opportunity to study theological books and treatises, attend sermons and lectures, and participate in household prayers. In fact, Mendelson notes that, in the seventeenth century, so time-consuming was the practice of piety that Frances Widdrington warned her sister to get a firm foundation in godly knowledge while single, for she would never have time to begin it properly while married. Those who followed the counsel of divines and pious friends became involved in a round of devotions which could consume half their waking hours (82).

Sunday church attendance was mandatory, of course, but the recommended everyday spiritual exercises for the pious aristocratic woman included "extemporaneous private prayer, a portion of Scripture and books of devotion, several hours of meditation on divine subjects, the examination of one's spiritual

condition, the confession of sin, and a record of all the preceding in a daily ledger of spiritual progress" (Mendelson 82). If the meditations of Mary Rich, Countess of Warwick (1624-1778), who was Clinton's peer and near contemporary, are any indication, Clinton would have had familiarity with Protestant works on the art of meditation, for Rich's imitative meditations indicate that she had read books by authors such as Joseph Hall, Richard Baxter, and other Puritan clerics (Mendelson 95). Elizabeth Clinton's similar presumed familiarity with the conventions of meditation make it likely that the exhortation/meditation at the end of her treatise is also modeled after published works on the art of divine meditation.

The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie is much more than a simple mother's advice book. It attempts to engage a wide audience by using sophisticated argumentation that displays an understanding of the theological systems of the day and makes these arguments for the liberal purpose of creating social change. One of the hallmarks of the complexity of the piece is its use of lactation imagery as a prompt for an occasional meditation, a genre-blurring device that demonstrates its flexibility and its intended audience far beyond familial bounds. In the era after Elizabeth's death, when religious and social leaders were clogging the printing presses in the clamor to prescribe and proscribe female behavior, Elizabeth Clinton stands out as the lone female voice addressing one of the most significant roles of a woman's life. The *Nurserie*, therefore, is an important historical repository of rhetorical information that sheds light on the era's attitudes and assumptions and shows how those predispositions could be manipulated by the female pen. In an even broader sense, the piece is important because it gives us some answers, at least for one woman in one time period, to the important questions Marilyn Yalom raises in her popular book *The History of the Breast*:

> "What has come down to us in literature, art, and most public documents has been generally refracted through a lens fitted for male eyes. Did women themselves see their breasts as symbols of religious or political nurturance? Did they accept the notion that their breasts belonged in babies' mouths and in men's hands? Where was the woman in all this? What did she think and feel?" (276).

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Dr. Heidi Laudien

Philomela's Pastorals: Reading Elizabeth Rowe

Elizabeth Rowe (1674-1737) was a prolific writer in her day who was actively engaged in the writing world of London and who made credible literary contributions that are in need of redress. She wrote complimentary and occasional verse, meditations, biblical paraphrases, epic verse, letters, pastorals, and divine love poetry. Following in the tradition of Isaac Watts (1674-1748), Rowe is perhaps best known for her divine poems, particularly her biblical paraphrases and hymns. Yet it does Rowe a disservice to read her exclusively through the lens of religiosity, for in doing so we overlook the depth and complexity of her work. Rowe is a complicated poet, and her ability to skillfully employ a range of stylistic registers and blend different generic categories within a single work while upholding an intimate, feminine, and often erotic tone sets her apart from her contemporaries.

While positioning Rowe within a literary camp is nearly impossible, undeniably she was a pastoral poet. Although to date no scholarship treats Rowe specifically as such, the sheer volume of pastoral poems within her poetic oeuvre and the occurrence of the pastoral throughout her literary career suggest that her attraction to the form was clearly a preoccupation. She employs the pastoral in her correspondence by calling upon the device of role-playing to impersonate the shepherdess of pastoral poetry, the abandoned mistress, and the heart-broken nymph. Pastoral nuances are further reflected in her amatory verses, her religious verses, and her translations. Throughout her career she plays with the pastoral and even mocks its conventions.[1] As a pastoral poet, Rowe made contributions to the form that differ from her male contemporaries. Specific points of departure in her employment and creation of pastoral include her thematic range and variety, the frequency of pastoral conventions in her poetry, and her complication of the pastoral narrative and figures. Rowe uses the pastoral to explore female desires that might otherwise be silenced and she pushes the limitations of the form by infusing elegiac and confessional qualities, making the pastoral conducive for personal discovery, inquiry, and lament.

While a distinction can be made between her early and later work—her *Poems on Several Occasions, by Philomela* (1696) and her poetic contributions to *The Athenian Mercury* illustrate a marked difference in style, content, and form from her later work, *Friendship in Death, or Letters from the Dead to the Living* (1728), *Letters Moral and Entertaining* (1729), *The History of Joseph* (1736) and *Devout Exercises of the Heart* (1737)—this move away from pastoral poetry toward pietistic expression, however, does not suggest that her earlier work lacks maturity or seriousness of purpose, as Henry Stecher suggests.[2] She did

not consider the pastoral to be an elementary poetic form she would later discard for higher models, as much of her later work is figured in pastoral terms. Both *Letters Moral and Entertaining* and *Devout Exercises of the Heart*, for example, are heavily imbued with pastoral landscape descriptions and imagery, particularly in her discussions of heaven and the afterlife.[3] Her publication history, as best detailed by Lori Davis Perry, shows a consistent interest in and employment of the pastoral and its images from her early contributions to the *Athenian Mercury* of 1693-1696 to her posthumous publication, *Miscellaneous Works* of 1739, in which pastorals predominate.[4] Thus for the purposes of this paper I have chosen to examine three pastoral poems from two very different times in her life which share thematic similarities, common poetic elements and deviations in order to explore how Rowe writes female desire and uses the pastoral to do so.

It is difficult to align Rowe's pastorals with a particular tradition. She chooses from an enormously diversified range of literary models and stylistic registers afforded by her predecessors and contemporaries. Moreover, the often coded messages which carry with them a considerable load of cultural and ideological weight make it virtually impossible to characterize her pastoral landscape. In one respect, Rowe's writings about country life date beyond Virgil to Hesiod's *Works and Days*, as they speak of husbandry, agriculture, and farming. We see shepherds herding goats, sheep and cattle, and laborers harvesting and sowing in this space as in her poem "A Pastoral. Inscrib'd to Mrs. Frances Worsley, [Now the right honourable the Lady Carteret]": "Beneath a shade that skreen'd the burning ray/They sit; their bleating flocks around them stray (lines 18-19). Goats and flocks are further found in "A Pastoral. In imitation of Drayton's second Nymphal": "O'er craggy rocks his browsing goats he led" (line 4), and "there, by curling streams, his flocks were fed" (line 15). Yet there is no degree of elaboration or artifice in her poetry through the use of literary metaphors and dialects such as in Theocritus's *Idylls*. In fact, in her poem "To My Lady Carteret," the speaker acknowledges her distaste for such generic trappings: "Such pleasing looks, in midst of Spring, adorn/The Flowry Fields; so smiles the Beauteous Morn../But, What are these dull Metaphors to you? (lines 5-7). Nor is there a Georgic influence with its prolonged and detailed descriptions of rustic life and labor.

At times, Rowe's pastoral space resembles a blend of Rapin and the neo-classicists with their emphasis on the Golden Age as in her poem "A Pastoral. In Imitation of Drayton's Second Nymphal."[5] The timeless idea of the tranquility of life in the country expressed by Fontenelle and others is also present in this poem:

Fair Chloe, leave the noisy town, and try
What artless sweets the country scenes supply:
While the young year in all its pride invites,
And promises a thousand gay delights;
While the glad sun his fairest light displays,
And op'ning blossoms court his cheerful rays.
The nymphs for thee shall deck some rural bow'r
With every verdant branch and painted flow'r;
To thee the swains full canisters shall bring,
Of all the fragrant treasures of the spring:
While some young shepherd in the sounding grove
Shall tune his reed for thee to strains of love.
Nor from the soft, inchanting accents run,
For who the pleasing charms of love would shun;
Such love as in these guiltless seats is known,
Such as a state of innocence might own... (lines 1-16)

Here, Rowe relies heavily on pastoral conventions common to Spenser, Drayton, and Milton.[6] There is a call to a rural retreat from the city and the promise of sporting and convening in nature. This retreat space reflects an ideal state or utopia, when mankind was pure and immortal, similar to the pastoral space of Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*.[7] By calling upon these pastoral accouterments and directly imitating the works of several English pastoral poets, the reader can really see Rowe working within a long pastoral tradition in poetry.

Yet what makes Rowe's pastorals so unique and fascinating are her deviations from tradition. Often her pastoral space moves away from a rustic influence toward a more exploratory space as in her poem "To Chloe. An Epistle":

All hail, ye fields and ev'ry happy grove!
How your soft scenes the tender flame improve,
And melt the thoughts, and turn the soul to love! (lines 21-23)

Here, her pastoral world encourages spiritual reflection. The "soft scenes" of nature are the catalyst for a conversion experience, turning the speaker's focus from the earthly to the heavenly, from the body to the soul.[8] One can further see an influence of James Thomson (1700-1748), whom Rowe apparently read and enjoyed.[9] Like Thomson's retreat space, Rowe's pastoral space is often characterized by innocence, goodness, and peace as in her poem "To a Friend Who Persuades Me to Leave the Muses":

All that Poet loves I have in view,
Delightsome Hills, refreshing Shades, and
Pleasant Valleys too,
Fair spreading Valleys cloath'd with lasting green,
And Sunny Banks with gilded streams between,
Gay as Elisium, in a Lovers Dream,
Or Flora's Mansion, seated by a stream,
Where free from sullen cares I live at ease,
Indulge my Muse, and wishes, as I please,
Exempt from all that looks like want or strife,
I smoothly glide along the Plains of Life (lines 21-29)

While she does play with the idea of retreat, and frequently uses nature to serve as a shelter from the upheavals of London life and politics, the country is not merely a place of escape.[10] This blurry, dreamy space is one that allows the speaker moments of liberation, independence, and choice. Her repeated use of the pronoun "I" places the female self as the center of this space, a variation by Rowe of pastoral tradition.[11] These lines are an early indication of the pastoral space and style which characterize both Rowe's profane and devout verse. It is frequently the standard scene for her spiritual and amatory meditations for she employs this setting when contemplating the divine, when speaking of desire, and when exploring injustices such as infidelity and unrequited love. It is the scene of her meditations, her laments, and her explorations religious and other.

In many of Rowe's pastorals, she exposes the figure of the sexualized female. In such poems the reader frequently encounters nymphs in pursuit of swains who both recognize their desires as valid, and are not afraid to act upon their sexual impulses. For example, through an interesting juxtaposition of two nymph figures, one coy, one promiscuous, Rowe exposes the figure of the sexualized nymph as a possible model of behavior in "A Pastoral. Inscrib'd to Mrs. Frances Worsley." Sylvia, "the pride of all the rural train," who is described as "coy" and seen fleeing from Celadon, "her intreating lover" (line 12), is introduced alongside Aurora, "a nymph divine" who "pursu'd a youth, who her embraces fled" (lines 61, 64). Rowe juxtaposes these two figures ultimately to give expression to female desire and the powers of love. The poem opens with a description of Sylvia and quickly turns to her lover Celadon, whose "graceful form by nature seem'd design'd/ To charm the nicest of the beauteous kind" (lines 3-4). Yet when Sylvia "her intreating lover fled," Celadon is defeated and "in mournful strains/Of his ungrateful shepherdess complains" (lines 20-21). At this point the perspective of the poem changes, and the next 34 lines are spoken by Celadon himself who turns to nature to tell his woes:

I wake to new despair, and tell my pain
To whisp'ring winds and sounding rocks in vain:
Yet these, relentless fair, more kind than thee,
In sighing echoes seem to plead for me (lines 38-41)

Celadon closes with a discussion of nature as the perfect retreat from the "busy city's restles[e] noise" (line 52), where "love triumphs" on the "peaceful plains." This introductory material of the poem is in keeping with traditional pastoral. A coy, beautiful nymph rejects a persistent swain who then turns to nature to tell of his woes. Nature invites the thoughts of the swain and proves to be the perfect backdrop for the lovers:

The conscious trees their verdant branches spread,
Inviting lovers to their friendly shade:
These scenes were made for love; each whisp'ring stream
And painted vale require the tender theme. (lines 46-49)

From there, this natural background is compared to the "busy city's restless noise," another common pastoral move, only to reaffirm the importance of a rural retreat.

Yet the poem changes direction entirely and breaks from convention with the introduction of Aurora. Unlike traditional pastorals, where a female figure would certainly be discouraged by an entreating lover, Aurora proves unstoppable. Initially described as "a nymph divine,/ With rosy cheeks, and sparkling eyes," she is later seen roving the woods as a "savage huntress" who "tracks the foaming boar" (lines 71-73). She is not discouraged by her lover's retreat, but rather buoyed by the challenge of ultimate conquest: "to different cares her thoughts were now confin'd,/ Endymion's image had possest her mind" (lines 74-75). By characterizing her as a nymph divine/savage huntress, Rowe complicates the traditional pastoral nymph figure. While initially shy and "gentler fair," this nymph ultimately recognizes her own sexual impulses and consciously acts upon her desires:

On Latmos' top the lovely youth she found,
Gently reclin'd upon the verdant ground,
His senses all in balmy slumbers drown'd.
Not young Adonis ever look'd more fair;
An am'rous breeze plays with his careless hair:
The virgin goddess fix'd her wond'ring sight;
Above her own transparent orb roll'd bright,
And all the stars lent their officious light.
She views his blooming charms with fond surprise,

Unusual transports in her bosom rise;
An unaccustom'd wish her breast inspires;
And now she checks, now sooths her wild desires,
Approaches softly now, and now retires:
At last resol'vd, a modest kiss she steals,
While Venus laughing, all the theft reveals. (lines 76-90)

This scene is significant on two counts. First, it marks Aurora's struggle to resist her beloved, Endymion, and to uphold convention by suppressing her sexual desires. Upon sight of the swain, feelings of desire arise in Aurora, yet the speaker goes to great lengths to emphasize that these feelings are "unusual" and "unaccustomed," and therefore innocent. Each of her advancing actions is mirrored with a moment of hesitation or retreat: "And now she checks, now sooths her wild desires,/Approaches softly now, and now retires" (lines 87-88). Second, Rowe too approaches this moment with some resistance repeating the word "now" to plot Aurora's every move and slow down the action of the poem. Yet ultimately, with the help of nature Aurora gives in to her desires and is "at last resolv'd" (line 89).

The poem closes with a carpe diem moment at which point the speaker advises gods and men to submit to love. Through a direct address, the speaker assures Sylvia, the "good" nymph, that some day she too will feel love's power, "And trust me, Sylvia, some propitious hour/Shall yet arrive, when thou shalt feel his pow'r" (lines 93-94). While Sylvia is in fact "soften'd by his melting lays" (line 96), and "returns a smile" (line 97), to the shepherd, she ultimately "Retires, and strives her alter'd thoughts to hide" (line 98). Yet why? All of the forces around her, in particular nature, the speaker, and her companions, encourage her to yield to her desires. Is it possible that not even the tale of a naughty nymph can convince Sylvia that submitting to desire is acceptable? Rather, she holds her position of resistance with steadfast determination, hiding her "alter'd thoughts" in order to uphold her "decent pride." Perhaps Rowe ends the poem in this manner as a gentle reminder of the oppressive force of desire for women. Regardless of the shepherd's attractiveness, or who authorizes the love, Sylvia must maintain her female honour and "pride," a word used to characterize her at both the opening and closing of the poem. Or, perhaps Rowe doubles back to the idea of virginal innocence in order to couch her more provocative suggestions of female desire seen through the figure of Aurora in the middle of the poem. Either way, it is a curious move by Rowe. As readers, we come away from the poem not knowing whether the expression of female desire is deemed acceptable, but certainly possible, as seen through the nymph, Aurora.

With ease, Rowe transcends the limitations of the pastoral form through frequent shifts in thematic focus. In her poem "By Dispair," Rowe transforms the genre of pastoral by infusing it with self-dramatization:

When the intruding horrors of the night,
Had just depriv'd our hemisphere of light;
And sable foldings seem'd to imitate,
The blackness and confusion of my fate,
As by a Rivers side I walkt along,
Uncurl'd and loose my artless tresses hung.
Dispair and love were seated in my face,
And down I sunk, upon the bending grass,
There to the streams, my mournful griefs relate,
Cursing the spightful Stars that rul'd my fate;
To see my tears the gentle floods swell high,
The Rocks relent, and groan as oft as I,
The wind less deaf, than my ungreatful Swain,
Listen and breath o're all my sighs again,
Ah, never, never, said I with an Air;
That poor complacent echo, griev'd to hear,
And softly fearing to increase my pain,
No, never, never, she reply'd again,
Then all things else, as trifles I dispise,
Said I, and smiling clos'd my wretched eyes.

This poem contains many of the features of traditional pastorals such as the personification of nature, the speaker who retires to the grass, the landscape particulars and the presence of the swain. In fact, it possesses many of the qualities Alexander Pope details as requisite in a pastoral in his *Discourse on Pastoral Poetry* (1704). It upholds "a design'd scene or prospect" that is presented with variety "obtain'd in a great degree by frequent comparisons, drawn from the most agreeable objects of the country; by interrogations to things inanimate; by beautiful digressions, but those short..."(121). Rowe isolates a particular moment, and through an intense comparison with and interrogation of nature, the speaker gives voice to her psychological state. There is a digression at the end of the poem when the speaker and nature engage in dialogue while upholding a unity of theme and form, thus adhering to pastoral convention.

Yet Rowe goes beyond Pope's prescriptives to arrive at an exploration of female desire. By presenting the reader with a pastoral landscape that is venturesome and exploratory,[12] the poem breaks from tradition to conquer unknown territory where a distraught female speaker deliberately turns to nature rather than man to express desire and grief. The artificiality of the traditional pastoral form is

completely absent, and what we are presented with instead is an insider's view into the process of self-exploration. Rowe illustrates in this poem how the pastoral can easily accommodate female expression and desire.

Rowe complicates the role of nature in this poem by conventionally gendering nature as female. While this move is not unique to her, nature is significant because it exists in this poem as a replacement for the figure of the swain. It is obvious from the speaker's characterization of her swain as "ungreatful" that her unsuccessful experience has resulted in an exchange of man for nature. Rather than seeking out comfort in another swain, a common move in the pastoral, the speaker turns to nature, who proves to be more receptive to her complaints and feelings, "The wind less deaf, than my ungreatful Swain" (line 13). Nature is compassionate; she is sensitive, supportive, and loving. The speaker in her loose, hanging artless tresses sinks to the bending grass, a symbol of pastoral humility, and breathes her heavy sighs. The darkness of the night mimics the darkness of her fate; the river flows like the movement of her hanging tresses. Despair and love sit heavy on her face as she sinks to the grasses. Her tears swell like the floods; the rocks relent as oft as she groans; the air breathes and she sighs. Nature and woman exist in perfect harmony.

Such gendering of nature is a complex process as it not only triggers complicated patterns of desire and culturally complex acts that function on many different levels; it also potentially transgresses sexual and social taboos. Coupling nature and woman in this intimate manner results in queer moments that undermine the attempt of the pastoral to construct stable binary categories of oppositional difference. These sensual moments cannot be entirely undone by the ultimate return of culturally sanctioned sexual and status arrangements, for Rowe continually contests conventional roles and plays with these moments of intimacy: "And down I sunk, upon the bending grass,/ There to the streams, my mournful griefs relate..." (lines 8-9). Unlike the "ungreatful Swain" (line 13), and not wanting to "increase [her] pain" (line 17), nature mimics the speaker's words with gentle sensitivity. They talk in unison, "Ah, never, never, said I with an Air," "no, never, never, she reply'd again" (lines 15, 18). Unlike the swain, nature is cautious and its echo fears to echo back, "That poor complacent echo" (line16). Given the context of the poem, one can conclude from this dialogue that the speaker renounces the love of man for the love of "other" and nature concurs. While nature "listen[s]" and "griev[s] to hear" the speaker's pain, her utterance, "No, never, never," provides the assurance the speaker seeks. The quiet but gentle sensitivity that nature willfully offers the speaker through this dialogue, and the language Rowe chooses to relate this bond are both compassionate and sensual.[13] Rowe's heavy use of the comma and her powerful, charged language – her swelling sighs, relentless groans, the echoes and the breath serve to problematize the dynamics of desire and representation in this poem.

Positioning this particular pastoral poem within a tradition is difficult. While George Herbert's "Grief" resembles Rowe's poem thematically, the tone of personal pain and the absence of artificial and stylized depictions of sorrow set this poem apart. The absence of the biblical echoes, quotations, and liturgical images makes Rowe's contribution markedly different from Herbert's. This poem, however, resembles Sir Thomas Wyatt's "I Find no Peace," and even John Donne's "A Valediction of Weeping," with its first-person narration and its articulations of pain and the purposes of life, yet Rowe's intimate relationship with nature and her speaker's utter collapse make this expression of desire all the more powerful, convincing, and provocative. Rowe talks of despair in terms of the body and couples despair with death, "And down I sunk, upon the bending grass" (line 8) and "closed my wretched eyes" (line 20). The first-person narration, and an uninterrupted single stanza contribute to the urgency and immediacy of the verse and message. Moreover there is a certain sensuousness to the poem conveyed through the heavy use of the dash as the speaker exhales sorrow with every new breath/verse.

Finally, the poem is significant for its suggestion of female liberation. While the pastoral provides Rowe's speaker with the place to articulate sexual desire, heartbreak, and frustration, it is also the place where she discovers choice. The speaker suggests that the center of existence is not in man, or even in God for that matter, but in woman herself, and it is in nature she ultimately finds comfort: "Then all things else, as trifles I dispise,/Said I, and smiling clos'd my wretched eyes" (lines 19-20). It is from this decision, to abandon city life and renounce man, that the speaker alleviates her initial confusion, "the blackness and confusion of my fate" (line 4). The ideological representations of pastoral poetry give way in Rowe to more concrete and detailed images as she pushes the boundaries of the form to voice the struggles that accompany acts of female liberation and to explore such implicit anxieties and tensions.

Rowe further explores same-sex relationships and transcendent utopian longing by manipulating the traditional form of the death lament in her poem, "Pastoral Elegy." By inverting traditional gender roles and establishing a complex relationship between the two nymph figures, Rowe breaks from the artificiality of the typical pastoral lament. Unlike traditional pastoral elegies where the dead figure is mourned by another of the opposite sex, Rowe's first inversion in this poem is an inversion of character roles. Daphne is lamented not by a grieving shepherd, but by another nymph, Philomela. Using two female figures ultimately poses a challenge to the conventional male/female structure of the death lament and results in potentially transgressive moments. While same sex friendship poetry was not unusual during the Renaissance and early 17th century, the implications of the Renaissance rhetoric of friendship and the complexities of defining carnality during the early modern period are varied.[14] Moreover, while the love between Daphne and Philomela is in fact figured both in the

language of friendship and the language of lovers (making it difficult to determine the precise nature of their bond), the intensity of the love is noteworthy in this poem. What results is a complex exchange between individual behavior and social exigency as these two nymphs negotiate their relationships with one another. Thus contrary to the fixed categories of the pastoral that define love relations according to binary oppositions, in this lament Rowe exposes the fluidity of desire experienced by individuals.

Daphne and Philomela are complicated figures, as is the relationship that exists between them. As a representation of transgressive female agency, Philomela offers a new form of passionate understanding. From the start of the poem it is clear that Philomela's passion for Daphne runs deep. She is willing to die in Daphne's stead, "So gentle Destinies, decide the strife;/Ah! Spare but hers, and take my hated Life" (lines 1-2), and is completely puzzled by her friend's willingness to die, "But find'st thou no Reluctancy to part?" (line 8). Philomela is utterly heartbroken by the prospect of losing her friend, "Ah me! ah me! this breaks my feeble heart" (line 7), and it is clear from her sentiments that once Daphne dies she will be entirely undone, incomplete and without purpose, not knowing what to do, or whom to love:

> For ah! Depriv'd my dearer Life of thee,
> The World is all a Hermitage to me:
> No more together we shall sit or walk,
> No more of Pan, or of Elysium talk:
> No more, no more shall I the fleeting Day
> In kind Endearments softly pass away:
> No more the Noblest height of Friendship prove,
> Now Daphne's gone, I know not who to Love. (lines 55-62)

By capturing Philomela moments after the death in lines thirty-five and following, and by juxtaposing her against Daphne, Rowe ingeniously uses the form of elegy to breath realism into this typically one-dimensional pastoral figure. As pastoral dialogue gives birth to funeral song, we are drawn into the psychology of Philomela. We hear her final exchange with Daphne and her grief-ridden reaction once Daphne dies. We watch her move from friendship to solitude. Rowe executes this move in three parts: the exchange between the two lovers, Daphne's final remarks, and Philomela's immediate reaction. All of these moments are recorded through the use of dialogue, forcing us to draw the rather morbid conclusion that once the dialogue stops, so does life.

Interestingly, however, once Daphne dies, Philomela turns to a discussion of herself, and one cannot help but think of Aphra Behn's speaker in "Song to a Scotish Tune," whose concerns revolve around the inevitable absence of her sexual pleasure once her lover Jemmy has gone to war.[15] Philomela repeatedly turns to a discussion of her predicament once Daphne is gone. She is left in the

desert world alone; "Fate cut my Thread, I'll not the loss survive" (line 42), there is no wretch "so curst as me" (line 46), and left "weeping on the shore alone" (line 50). Philomela's life is deprived by the loss of Daphne. The world is now a hermitage where she is left not knowing how to pass the day.

Conversely, Daphne welcomes death without reluctance, "Without the least Reluctance, all below,/Save thee, dear Nymph, I willingly forego" (lines 9-10), and is confident that she has nothing to fear in death, "Not Death's Grim Looks affright me, tho so near;/Alas! Why should the Brave and Vertuous fear" (lines 33-34). In fact, she looks forward to the prospect of meeting new nymphs and shepherds in heaven: "In those blest shades, to which my soul must flee,/More beauteous Nymphs, and kinder shepherds be" (lines 12-13).

This particular juxtaposition of attitudes, Philomela's self-loathing and willingness to sacrifice herself, and Daphne's readiness to die regardless of the heartbreak it will cause Philomela, "That from this tiresome stage I may be gone" (line 6), is a curious move by Rowe. Why is it that Philomela is so distraught at the prospect of her friend's death and Daphne seems indifferent? In fact, Daphne claims that in the afterlife she will not "reflect on what [she] left behind" (line 14). Why then does Daphne wish later in the poem to reunite with Philomela, contingent upon her chastity, "There, if her Innocence she still retain,/My Philomela I shall claspe again" (lines 24-25)? Rowe's "shadowed language of erotic ellipses," a phrase coined by Harriette Andreadis to describe the possibility of transgressive content in women's writing, appositely elucidates the language used in this poem (in particular lines 25, 59-62) to describe the intensity and ambivalence of feeling between Philomela and Daphne. Regardless of the conclusions we may draw about their relationship, the juxtaposition of Daphne and Philomela serves a dual function—to intensify Philomela's commitment to and feelings of love for Daphne, and to create a certain ambivalence of feelings between these two nymphs, blurring the boundaries between love and carnal knowledge. Such an exposition in dialogue of the different claims of love and friendship belongs to the pastoral tradition which involves "implicitly or explicitly a critical exploration and counterbalancing of attitudes, perspectives, and experiences."[16] Rowe's pastoral dialogue between Philomela and Daphne does just this. She exploits the opportunity for meaningful dialectic in this poem by exposing the tensions and anxieties implicit in articulating same-sex desire.

Thus it is hard to escape the pastoral in Rowe's complete body of works. At every turn, pastoral images, figures, and landscapes appear. Although scholars are quick to point out that she was embarrassed by her early pastorals and was anxious to divorce herself from her associations with the *Athenian Mercury,* I believe otherwise. Evidence suggests that the pastoral was a controlling principle throughout her work, her correspondence, her letters, verse, and prose.

Her retreat to the countryside of Frome in her later years and her continued pastoral role-playing and sentimental relationship with Lady Hertford are all testaments to her pastoral preoccupations throughout her life and literary career.

A close reading of Rowe's pastorals illustrates her ability to use the complexity and structure of the genre as an entry point to her meditative and thoughtful articulations on life and love. In each of the poems explored in this study Rowe crafts powerful heroine figures who are not afraid to express desire. Whether she is a coy nymph, a savage huntress, or even an ungrateful shepherdess, she is anything but superficial. Daphne, Philomela, Aurora, and Sylvia all break from the traditional one-dimensional nymph figure by expressing desire. They recognize their sexual impulses, they pursue fleeting lovers, they express love and longing for one another and they even go so far as to find a substitute in nature for the figure of the swain. Placing these figures within a pastoral landscape that is venturesome and experimental allows Rowe the flexibility to manipulate the pastoral form, making it conducive to personal discovery, female liberation, desire, and even lament. Rowe's inventiveness with the pastoral of course spans beyond the limitations of these three poems under study.[17] In other pieces she infuses the pastoral with both secular and sacred elements, blurring the boundaries between earthly and heavenly. What results are pastorals that challenge the reader to explore the interconnectedness of sexual and spiritual desire. As a daring pastoralist then, Rowe uses the form to expand the genre, to define it, and most certainly to demonstrate its full potential.

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Rowe, Elizabeth Singer, *The Miscellaneous works in prose and verse of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe...To Which are added, Poems on several occasions, by Mr. Thomas Rowe...In two volumes.* London: Printed for R. Hett, at the Bible and Crown in the Poultry; and and R. Dodsley, at Tully's-Head in Pall Mall, 1739.

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Rowe, Elizabeth Singer, *Poems on Several Occasions. Written by Philomela.* London: printed for John Dunton at the Raven in Jewen-street, 1696.

Rowe, Elizabeth Singer, *Letters on Various Occasions, in prose and verse. By the author of Friendship in Death. To which are added ten letters by another hand.* London: printed for T. Worrall, 1729.

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Notes

[1] In a letter dated 1729, Rowe writes to Lady Hertford from her retirement in Frome:

> "I find by a too guilty experience, that people in low life take an insolent sort of pleasure in leveling their superiors; but I must own, that since I have divested you of your titles and equipage, you are grown more intimate and familiar to my imagination, and my affection for you is heightened by conversing upon an equality with you. I have visited your cleanly farm without any ceremony, and wandered in green pastures flocked with lowing herds and bleating flocks. Only your domestics are not quite so elegant as I could wish. Instead of such nice romantic damsels as Almeda, I meet harmless, unthinking, round-faced lasses; and for powdered beaux in shining liveries, mimicking opera airs and songs, I meet Colin and Lubberkin, with russet coats and sun-burnt faces, whistling some awkward tune, or roaring out a country ballad with voices as harsh as their fellow animals which bellow on the mountains..."

Elizabeth Rowe. *Letters on various occasions, in prose and verse. By the author of Friendship in death. To which are added ten letters by another hand* (London: Printed for T. Worrall, 1729).

[2] Stecher, Henry. *Elizabeth Rowe, the Poetess of Frome: A Study in Eighteenth-Century English Pietism.* Bern: Herbert Lang, (1973): 71.

[3] In Letter II of *Friendship in Death*, a gentleman writes to his friend in England describing heaven as a pastoral paradise:

> "But how shall I describe this fair, this fragrant, this enchanting Land of Love! The delectable vales and flow'ry lawns, the myrtle shades and rosy bowers, the bright cascades and chrystal rivulets rolling over orient pearls and sands of gold: here they spread their silent waves into broad transparent lakes, smooth as the face of Heaven; and there they break with rapid force through arching rocks of diamond and purple amethist. Plants of immortal verdure creep up the sparkling clifts, and adorn the prospect with unspeakable variety. Oh my Beville, could I lead you through the luxurious bowers and soft recesses where pleasure keeps its eternal festivals, and revels with guiltless and unmolested freedom!"(7-8).

[4] For a comprehensive chronology of poems, refer to Lori Davis Perry's "Appendix B."

[5] According to Davis Perry, "The most interesting aspects of Singer's pastorals appear when she veers away from Fench Neoclassic theory, or actively subverts it. She seems, in fact, to have distrusted the pastoral recommended by Rapin and Fontenelle..." (334).

[6] According to Davis Perry, "Singer was aware of Spenser, Drayton, and Milton's influence on the genre, and she was also familiar with the pastoral verse of Katherine Philips, Anne Killigrew, Aphra Behn, and "Ephelia" for she imitates them directly" (333). For further parallels between Rowe and Milton see also Achinstein, Sharon. "'Pleasure by Description' Elizabeth Singer Rowe's Enlightened Milton." In *Milton and the Grounds of Contention.* Ed. Mark R. Kelly, Michael Lieb, and John T. Shawcross. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003. 64-87.

[7] Davis Perry suggests that Rowe preferred an approach more similar to Spenser's, in which seemingly Arcadian settings appear, upon careful reading, to be riddled with subversive political statement and intimations" (334).

[8] This pastoral world frequently resembles the 18th century concept of the holy hermitage, where both man and woman can turn to the country for contemplation, as illustrated in *Letters Moral and Entertaining*.

[9] According to Stecher, "James Thomson's poem 'Winter,' which appeared in 1726, immediately caught Rowe's attention. His appreciation of natural beauty and his visual descriptions of the countryside appealed to her romantic tastes" (152).

[10] Rowe's pastoral landscape is often a reflection of the speaker's emotional state. This can be witnessed in "To Despair," which is discussed later in the paper and in "Love and Friendship: A Pastoral." Upon the loss of Aminta, nature is depicted in this poem as a space devoid of all happiness and is anything but a retreat space:

> But on the plain when she no more appears,
> The plain a dark and gloomy prospect wears.
> In vain the streams roll on; the eastern breeze
> Dances in vain among the trembling trees.
> In vain the birds begin their ev'ning song,
> And to the silent night their notes prolong:
> Nor groves, nor chrystal streams, nor verdant field
> Can wonted pleasure in her absence yield (lines 35-42).

[11] As Davis Perry suggests, "Elizabeth Singer's adoption of the pseudonym Philomela, a name which appears in several of her pastorals, encourages her readers to view these poems as somehow more personal than they might otherwise. The identity of the poet Philomela and the speaker Philomela within the poems creates an expectation of autobiography...[yet] distinctions between the author and the speaker are deliberately blurred for both literary and political purposes" (333).

[12] We can see tendencies in Rowe's treatment of nature that are reminiscent of Pope's "Windsor Forest" in which the speaker is taken out of the realm of time and space and transported to a visionary landscape. Rowe's landscape acts and speaks in tandem with woman. It mimics the psychological state of the speaker, and what results is a kind of eerie world where the impulses of the heart can be voiced and comprehended. Rowe sets up this other world space within the first four lines. The pathetic fallacy is in place here, and the speaker goes to great lengths to illustrate this relationship between woman and nature.

[13] Isaac Watt's description of Rowe's work in the preface to the 1795 version of *Devout Exercises of the Heart* captures the style of this poem with precision:

> [Her verses] are animated with such fire as seems to speak the language of holy passion, and discovers them to be the dictates of her heart...The style, I confess, is raised above that of common meditation or soliloquy; but let it be remembered she was no common Christian. As her virtues were sublime, so she was bright and sparkling, and the vivacity of her

> imagination had a tincture of the muse almost from her childhood. This made it natural to her to express the inward sentiments of her soul in more exalted language, and to paint her own ideas in metaphor and rapture near akin to the diction of poesy.

[14] According to Harriette Andreadis, how women poets of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and even eighteenth centuries gave their feelings for one another verbal form is an expression of their cultural embededness in historically variable understandings and definitions of erotic behavior. Andreadis further suggests that these understandings and definitions were not uniform throughout English society, but varied according to social class and geographic location: "Certain behaviors, both physical and verbal, that may seem to us similar to what we are accustomed to defining as 'lesbian' may have been a tacitly accepted cultural element in certain segments of society...and may not necessarily have been recognized as transgressive" (22-23).

[15] See Laudien, Heidi, "From Pastoral to 'Pastorelle': A New Context for Reading Aphra Behn." *Aphra Behn: Identity, Alterity, Ambiguity*. Eds. Mary Ann O'Donnell, Bernard Dhuicq, and Guyonne Leduc. Paris: L'Harmattan Press (2000): 93-94.

[16] Cullen, Patrick. *Spenser, Marvell, and Renaissance Pastoral.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, (1970): 1.

[17] See Laudien, Heidi. "The Pastoral Poetry of Aphra Behn and Elizabeth Singer Rowe." In *The Female Wits: Women and Gender in Restoration Literature and Culture*. Eds. Pilar Cuder-Dominguea, Zenon Luis-Martinez and Juan A. Prieto-Pablos. Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2006. 43-63.

Margaret Sankey

Addison, Steele and the Satirical Counter Offensive Against Jacobitism 1715-1717

During the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, the population of Great Britain had access, if they wanted it, to reasonably timely, accurate reporting of the ongoing conflict. If we are to take the diarist Dudley Ryder as an example, interested parties could remain remarkably well-informed from news sheets and letters circulated through the coffee houses and clubs. Within days of the Battle of Preston, London printers sold half-sheet maps, carefully labeled to allow the reader to follow the course of the battle and listing quite accurately the killed, wounded and captured of both sides. That the government took heavy casualties was not hidden, and was presented matter-of-factly. The British Library also has a bound volume of collected newsletters circulated in London during the rebellion, also factually oriented and able to be corroborated by later reports from the participants.

Despite flat reportage that the rebels had been defeated in Preston and stopped at Sheriffmuir, some people simply refused to believe what they were being told and continued to spread rumors that the rebel army had survived Preston, that Sheriffmuir had been a rebel victory, or, increasingly bizarre as the winter wore into 1716, that some Jacobites like the executed Earl of Derwentwater had been the cause of freakish appearances by the northern lights and miracles that constrained government punishment of other rebels. George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, complained that people were "every day opening and discovering new cause to apprehend popish power and all the dismal consequences of it!," while Dudley Ryder related two dismal visits to relatives, one of whom "gave the most strange, absurd, improbable turns to any matters of fact that look ill towards Tories that it is shocking to hear them. Whatever is said is only the misrepresentation of their enemies." The other Ryder relative, Mrs. Evans, "an ignorant Tory, looked upon the strange appearances [of the northern lights] as a prodigy that portended great things and her sister said the king would not have pardoned the rest of the lords except for that."

Jacobite sympathizers and those who refused to believe the news reports pointed to the total government monopoly of the media to undermine its credibility. When George I allowed a crackdown in the summer of 1715, in anticipation of the rebellion, the ministry took the opportunity to shut down Tory newspapers and imprison their printers, a move which both disabled Jacobite propaganda in England and inconvenienced the printers often to the point of bankruptcy.

With opposition printers George Flint and Isaac Dalton in jail for printing the *Weekly Remarks* in defiance of the ban, the only newsletters for sale publicly were the official one, which any reader appreciated were the mouthpieces of the Whig ministry. When Jacobites distributed news, they were at a disadvantage, distributing through printers like Robert Freebairn in Perth, or by passing much-copied letters, ostensibly written as private, hand to hand for public consumption.

Clearly, the facts were not going to change anyone's mind. The government needed to show confidence and make it clear that the rebels had been beaten, that they were in custody, and that almost everything was under control. The way to do this was to include ridicule and satire in their information counter-offensive. From the earliest glimmerings of rebellion, the government had plenty of low-end mockery to draw upon. Whig sponsored "mug-clubs" hastily too to the streets singing old anti-Catholic favorites and as Ryder saw it, "are of service to the government to keep up the public spirit and animate its friends, and I believe it will gain over the population and make King George popular." Unfortunately, the early efforts included dated rude songs including lines like "We'll chase the dogs back to their bogs/or drive them to the devil," referring to the Irish of the last Jacobite war, but the clubs quickly improvised new lyrics including topical references to the dying speeches of executed prisoners. One jaunty song mocked the death of Rev. William Paul,

> "Indeed I have swore/twice, thrice and times more/he had not the least right to the throne./The living I got/I am sorry Got wot/made those oaths very glibly go down!"

In response to disbelief that the prisoners had been taken at Preston, the army marched the hundred most valuable participants to London, taking care to arrive during daylight and move them through the streets bound and obviously defeated. The Whig mob was already clamoring for the parade, having twice already performed it themselves with effigies as substitutes for real prisoners. On October 20, 1715, despite the Lord Mayor's refusal to allow a full procession, Whig clubs marched with effigies of the "Tory Defectors" who were burned at the end of the route. Two weeks later, on the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, they mounted an elaborate production including the Pope, infants in warming pans, rebels with halters being dragged backwards as prisoners and crowds of men singing "Lillibulero" and shouting "No Pretender, No Tyrant, No Runaway Generals!" The presence of actual rebels guaranteed an enthusiastic response, but they could stage their own parades with even better effect.

The parade of the prisoners remained a favorite of Whig mobs in the city, who adopted it as the form of their celebrations. In 1717, the Loyal Society, based in a Cheapside tavern, The Roebuck, organized a parade of effigies which included all the enemies of the state, not just those who had actually been captured, including the Earl of Mar, Thomas Forster, the Pretender himself, "four highland rebels, tied and bound on horseback and their horses led, after the manner of the Highgate Cavalcade [the actual prisoner entry into London in 1715]," two "Jack Puddings" with censors and holy water, a child in a warming pan, the Pope, Cardinal Filippo Gualterio (Protector of England at the Vatican), two friars, one of them grossly obese and a man dressed as the Orange Champion playing the hero.

At their "execution," the effigies delivered last speeches, devastating in their mockery. The effigy Pretender declared "as the devil would have it again, old friend Lewis [Louis XIV] lifted off the stage, to the prejudice of the cause of popery. However, by the encouragement of 5,000 great names and 5,000 drunken oaths, I prepared for an invasion. I left my friends to hang or drown for the sake of the church!" The fake Forster sniveled, "I declare I never drank sack-posset at Preston, it being only true Orthodox buttered ale. I forgive my enemies, even the messenger that pinioned me at Barnet and the grenadiers that held my horse. I desire to be forgiven of everybody, especially those I injured when I escaped out of Newgate." Mar had perhaps the best lines, "I declare I die in charity with all the world and forgive all my enemies, except the Whigs. If I have any friends amongst this great multitude, I desire they will continue constant until their brains are taken out of their heads and washed again."

One of the earliest written satires, written anonymously and published by at least two London printers, mocked claims that the rebel parade into London had been staged, putting ridiculous claims into the mouth of Thomas Forster, writing "from my headquarters at Newgate." He related that the king's troops greeted them with great civility at Preston, then assigned "a foot soldier to attend every one of us, to march before with a horse bridle in one hand and a firelock in the other, while the horse grenadiers cleared the way. In this triumphant manner, we entered the city..."

Such vulgar demonstrations, protected by powerful Whig patrons until violence spun out of control in the spring of 1716, were not doing the job. The government needed sophisticated and droll anti-Jacobite written materials aimed at the wavering Tories and the unconvinced public. Certainly this included reasoned and elaborate political arguments by propaganda luminaries like Daniel Defoe, but deliberately included light-hearted satire from two Whig masters of the form, Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. Both men had longstanding ties to the Whig clubs, and had been publishing political papers since the reign of

William III, including tracts on war planning in 1708, the Sacheverell Riots and the accession of George I. Steele, recently knighted, and the protégé of the Duke of Newcastle, shifted his publication, *The Englishman*, from attacks on Oxford, Bolingbroke and Ormonde to the rebellion itself, while Addison created a new paper, the *Freeholder* in December 1715. The first three issues of each were issued gratis, subsidized by the ministry's £500 grant to each man, and to the government's delight, soon both were selling well enough to make a profit even above the subsidy. Part of the arrangement was permission for parts of articles to be reprinted without attribution in handbills and other papers, including the Edinburgh *Weekly Packet.*

As early as the 1709 *Tatler*, Steele had justified the use of humor against crimes like "ingratitude," out of the reach of laws, "is it not lawful to set marks upon persons who live outside the law and do base things? We shall therefore take it for a very moral action to find good appellation for offenders and turn 'em into ridicule under feigned names." Addison saw the positive of being able to "laugh men out of vice and folly...at some use to the world" in the *Spectator.* Steele had been deputy to the Lord Lieutenant of Middlesex, and took part in the roundup of prisoners, but insisted that they be treated politely. Both men protested harsh plans to execute all six of the lords tried for treason, and saw satire as a way to convince both the public *and* the government that the Jacobites were more of a joke than a threat, and certainly a manageable problem.

Addison and Steele's attitude of civility winning over enemies was very much in the spirit of their political and cultural antecedent, the Earl of Shaftesbury. Whig leaders like Charles Townshend hailed from the ranks of country gentlemen, who sought ways to differentiate themselves from their Tory rivals, and from their foreign counterparts in the governments of France. Their solution came in the form of "civic virtue," as expressed by the Earl of Shaftesbury's many written works, and the articles, poems and instruction manuals of his followers, who expounded a classicized citizenship, in which gentlemen show their innate worth through virtuous manners, while carrying out the duties of their offices. In the supposed meritocracy of the Whig regime, a man of relatively humble origins could prove that he belonged by being polite, and bearing arms or representing the state in a restrained, literate and courteous manner expressed through generosity and a respect for women and social inferiors. Ironically, a genuine desire to follow these ideals of behavior led several Whig leaders, including Townshend and General Cadogan to be abused relentlessly by Jacobite women.

Built into this concept of Whig gentlemen was the "other," usually the French, whose artificial court society used elaborate masks to cover immoral desires and

fabricated protocol to hinder meritocracy and representative government. It was easy to laugh at Frenchmen described in *A New Satyr Against the French King* as "those apes, those echoes, and the shews of men, shall be the subject for my pen!" This also struck a deep chord for Englishmen, who would probably not disagree with diarist John Evelyn, who suspected French manners of "insinuating their trifles...and almost debauched all the sobriety of former times. They are continually aspiring with their tyranny by all arts of dissimulation." With Jacobite connections to the court at St. Germain, especially as some of the leaders like Derwentwater and the Earl of Nithsdale had been raised there, it was an easy transfer of already understood satirical code. Jacobites and their Tory supporters were emphatically *not English gentlemen*, but the condition was not necessarily fatal or uncorrectable.

For Addison, the humorous editions of the *Freeholder* are scattered strategically through its publication run at numbers 3, 4, 8 and then the saga of the Tory Foxhunter at 22 and 47. The others are clever, though detailed and heavy political refutations of Jacobite manifestos and legal arguments defending the Protestant Succession. A little laughter makes the lectures more palatable. Number 3 is the quixotic campaign memoir of a misguided Jacobite, who thinks long and hard about reasons to overthrow George I, can come up with no grievances and agrees to "rebel first and find out reasons for it afterwards!" His cavalry troop proceeds to charm prostitutes, terrify pregnant women and troll the countryside because, "being a great lover of sport, I determined not to be a Minister of State, or fobbed off with a Garter" but stays on the lookout for a tasty piece of real estate, "a noble country seat which belonged to a Whig and pleased myself the remainder of the day with several alterations I intended to make in it." Even a sword-waving Jacobite can be brought to reason, however, as Addison concludes his essay with the now captured officer advising "we thought it high time to put in practice that Passive-Obedience in which our party so much glories, and which I would advise them to stick to in the future."

Numbers four and eight poke fun at the power of women to influence male politics, insisting that "it lies in the power of every fine women to secure at least half a dozen able-bodied men to His Majesty's service," so long as it is the right majesty. This was a direct refutation of the activities of Jacobite women, who were actively aiding their male relatives as they escaped, hid property or absconded to France. The most notorious, of course, was the Nithsdale escape from the Tower of London, in which Lady Nithsdale smuggled in female clothing and her husband walked out of the Tower in a sack gown and full beard. Steele and Addison pounced. The Whig-supported theater in Drury lane produced "The Cobbler of Preston" in February 1716, mocking the battle and the rebel prisoners in a spin-off from "The Taming of the Shrew," while the otherwise innocuous romantic comedy "A Match in Newgate" spawned a

running joke with Steele about a possible sequel, "A Match Out of Newgate" in which Thomas Forster, who escaped before he could come to trial, meets Nithsdale (still in women's clothing) on the road and falls madly in love on the lam.

The most obvious Shaftesbury-inspired moments come in Addison's essays 22 and 47. The first introduces us to a kind of "Anti-Whig," a man described in Latin (a neat and civically virtuous accomplishment) as "*Studiis rudis, sermone barbarus, impetus strenuous, manu promptus, cogitatione celer*" (uncultivated in taste, rude in speech, restlessly impetuous, quick to come to blows, hasty in thought). He goes on to declare that there has been no good weather since 1688 (a reference to the Protestant Wind) and "makes it a rule never to believe any of your printed news." Additionally, he heaps curses on travel, "learning to jabber" foreign languages, trade and the "London merchants." Much satisfied to drink water, "provided it had enough malt in it," the man eventually leaves, satisfied that "he had met with an opportunity of showing me his parts, and left me a much wiser man than he found me."

A boor and a bigot he might be, but the case is not terminal, as number 47 finds the same man in London to testify on behalf of one of the imprisoned Jacobites. Seeing MPs worshipping in St. Paul's, learning that none of the Tower lions had died upon learning of the taking of Perth and seeing for himself that evil Presbyterian mobs had not destroyed a statue of Charles I, as he had heard in the country, the experience is capped by the sight of George I's son and daughter in law in the park with their daughters. "He declared they were the finest children he had ever seen in his life, and if anyone had told him it had been impossible for such to be born out of England, he would never believe it!" That same progenitor, George I, completes the process by releasing the Jacobite friend, and the Tory Foxhunter leaves London a Hanoverian convert. It is no coincidence that Addison's suggestion to Charles Delafaye was passed up the line to the Prince of Wales, who made a point the Summer of 1716 of being seen in public with the little blonde princesses.

Steele follows a similar track in the *Englishman*, noting particularly the fine Whig balance between modulated rusticism in the life of a citizen and the life of a "sloven." Unlike Addison, Steele is much more conscious of the involvement of Scots in the rebellion, and makes a point of using the term "British," even in a paper titled the *Englishman*! Steele also alternated humor with serious discussion, in one case deviating from his argument on constitution to lightheartedly address the contested ability of George I to speak English. If a reader desired heavy anti-Jacobite material, he or she need only look at the paper's advertisements, which consistently touted sermons with titles like "Popery and Treachery Inseparable!"

The early 18th century media was full of political animals, making it natural to suspect the motivations of any reporting, and whatever their intentions, Addison and Steele were no exception. After much letter writing and importuning, both men were suitably rewarded for their anti-Jacobite work. Steele, who was already an MP, received a seat on the Commission for Forfeited Estates in Scotland, and Addison was named to a seat on the Board of Trade and Plantations, later traded up for Secretary of State South in 1717.

Lacking opinion polls, I do not have a measure of how many minds were changed or feathers tactfully smoothed by these attempts to bring Jacobites into line with the new dynasty. The cruder attempts at humor certainly enraged tempers, not quieted them, although in their bluntness made the point that the government was triumphant. However, Addison and Steele, as the official mouthpieces of the state, made a crucial and intriguing point. Not only was the rebellion of such little threat that one may read equally of plays, art exhibits and fashion, but that former rebels and their Tory connections, can, and should rejoin British society on friendly terms. It ran entirely in concert with the evolved policy of pardons, reconciliation and reintegration being practiced by George I and his ministers towards Jacobites from the 1715 rebellion, and contributed, hopefully, to a future when the public would be laughing *with* ex-Jacobites and not *at* them.

Bob DeSmith

More *Wit*: "Death Be Not Proud" in Edson and Donne
"I think I die in the end" (Vivian Bearing in *Edson 8*)

Margaret Edson's play *Wit,* which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1999, centers on Vivian Bearing, a scholar of John Donne's poetry who is dying of ovarian cancer. Vivian's medical journey—she is undergoing aggressive chemotherapy under the chipper direction of her university's Chief of Oncology ("You must be very tough" [12] and "Keep pushing the fluids" [34], he tells her)—is paralleled by another journey as Vivian must prepare to die by losing both her sense of autonomous power and her self-chosen isolation for what we might call the power of weakness and the choice of fellowship.[1] Produced as a film in 2001 (directed by Mike Nichols and starring Emma Thompson), this play invites us to examine the impersonality of medical treatment and the goals of academic scholarship, as well as the "ultimate"[2] topics of dying and living well. Perhaps the play's most remarkable feature is that its author is a kindergarten teacher whose commitments to reading, kindness, and simple truths infiltrate her play.

At last year's conference, I suggested that teaching the play or screening the film would make a good complement to studying Donne's *Holy Sonnets*, and I tried to suggest ways that the play raised interesting issues for students of literature, and particularly students of Donne's poetry. Not enough was said then about Edson's use of Donne's sonnets, particularly "Death be not Proud," which has a prominent place in the play. What I hope to do this afternoon, then, is explore, even test, the ways in which Edson's characters interpret "Death be not Proud" and examine how the context which the play creates offers insight into the poems.

It should be said first of all that Margaret Edson knows her Donne.[3] This is apparent when we notice the poems Edson alludes to without actually citing. For instance, the sonnet "Batter my Heart," in which the speaker at the same time pleads with God to have his way with him and registers his resistance to such submission, is nowhere directly mentioned in the play, yet it seems to capture exactly what is happening to Vivian as she reconsiders her commitments in the face of death. Speaking of the sonnets in general, John Sykes explains, "Professor Bearing herself undergoes an inner religious drama remarkably like one portrayed in the sonnets in which she is expert. Her suffering during her ordeal with ovarian cancer and its treatment is, as Donne suggests, a means to correction, and ultimately salvation" (166). In other words, by invoking one of the best known of the *Holy Sonnets*, Edson invites an awareness of the entire set of sonnets into her play. In fact, "Death be not Proud" stands as a kind of synecdoche for these sonnets.

More specifically, Edson alludes to Donne's "Hymn to God, my God, in my Sickness" in ways which suggest the poem may help us to understand her main character. Vivian's observation that her doctors and interns "read *me* like a book. Once I did the teaching; now I am taught" (32), and her later comment that she wants to understand what the doctors say when they "anatomize me" (37), invoke Donne's second stanza:

> Whilst my physicians by their love are grown
> Cosmographers, and I their map, who lie
> Flat on this bed, that by them may be shown
> That this is my South-west discovery
> *Per fretum febris*, by these straits to die. (ll. 6-10)[4]

These lines, as well as the entire poem, resonate well with Vivian's experience: like Donne, she is in confined to bed; at one point in the drama she develops an uncomfortable fever, and, of course, she is sailing into the straits of death. Indeed, the poem (though, as I have pointed out, it is never directly mentioned in the play) seems to point out Vivian's direction in the play: the next lines of the poem after the ones just cited are "I joy" (l. 11).[5] As Sykes comments,

> Unlike the speaker in Donne's poem, Bearing is not ready to look beyond the horizons of the world in which she has successfully made her way. Thus the poem is not only descriptive of Vivian's state as an object of research laid out before her doctors; it is also theologically prescriptive, charting the course she must follow." (164-65)

Until the final scene, there is little "joy" in Vivian's experience. Still, the play suggests that it is joy which Vivian needs—and what she gets in the end. Further, the poem's "So death doth touch the resurrection" (l. 15) provides both a synopsis of "Death be not Proud" and a gloss on the play's last scene, in which Vivian rises from her deathbed, shuffles off her mortal coil, and heads off toward light.[6] And the poem's last line, "Therefore that He may raise, the Lord throws down" helps us interpret Vivian's experience ("I am learning to suffer," Vivian says [27]).[7]

I have been arguing that Edson knows her Donne, that she uses his poems implicitly and explicitly in her play in ways that are meaningful and interesting. Thus Edson's play, combined with a study of Donne's poetry, offers a good place to consider the role of literary allusion, how literary canons get renewed and reused, and how contemporary culture makes use of seventeenth-century poems. Good stuff for the literature classroom. But I must add to this discussion the fact that Edson uses Donne to her own ends: she is not interested first of all in offering a new or stunning interpretation of the *Holy Sonnets*.

Rather, having created a character who is a rigorous scholar of Donne's poems, her real interest is to use Bearing's attitudes toward, and interpretations of, Donne's poems to characterize her. This is as it should be.

Thus Bearing's interpretations should not be taken as definitive: they tell us more about her than about Donne. Gamerman reports that Edson "decided to make Vivian a specialist in the poems of John Donne, for the simple reason that she'd always heard that they were the most demanding in English literature" (see also Martini). So Vivian declares, "Donne's wit is . . . a way to see how good you really are" (18; the ellipsis is Edson's), and her interpretations of Donne, like her own character, are sinuous, rigorous, and distanced ("I could be so powerful," she says [40]). That her interpretations reveal her self is well illustrated in a scene in which Bearing recalls or imagines herself explicating "If poisonous minerals." In the film version we see her in her hospital garb, pointer whacking at an overhead of the poem whose white letters wash over her: she is dedicated to the minute jots and tittles of her text. Thus when she summarizes the poem—"The speaker of the sonnet has a brilliant mind, and he plays the part convincingly; but in the end he finds God's *forgiveness* hard to believe, so he crawls under a rock to hide" (41)—Vivian reveals more about herself than she does about Donne's speaker.

Still, Gamerman says that when Edson turned to Donne, her first reading of Donne baffled her. "The harder I worked, I didn't get an answer," she says. "Some of these poems are too complicated. What's the point if they don't flow as poems?" She began "a pretty comprehensive study," which eventually led her to an understanding that "Donne is being suspicious of simplicity"—much like Vivian herself.

Edson's last comment finds its way into the play (49), and Edson makes use of this view when Vivian's intern, a former student of hers, compares the delights of poetry to the delights of lab research. Vivian's nurse asks him whether Donne ever solves the puzzle of his relationship to God. Jason replies, "Oh, no way. The puzzle takes over. You're not even trying to solve it anymore. Fascinating, really. Great training for lab research. Looking at things in increasing levels of complexity" (60). One of Edson's themes is the correspondence of dry academic scholarship and objective medical research: neither gives us access to truth.

But what of Donne? Is he "suspicious of simplicity"? Does he hide from God? More broadly, is Edson fair to Donne? Interpreting Donne's "Death be not Proud" is the central issue early in the play when Vivian recalls a seminal encounter during her undergraduate days with Prof. Ashford, who becomes her mentor and, in the end, her friend. Ashford takes Vivian to task for shallow

work: "You must begin with a text, Miss Bearing, not with a feeling" (13). She quotes the first two lines of the poem and continues, "You have entirely missed the point of the poem, because, I must tell, you, you have used an edition of the text that is inauthentically punctuated. In the Gardner edition" (13)—at this point Vivian meekly interrupts but is shut down. Ashford explains,

> The sonnet begins with a valiant struggle with death, calling on all the forces of intellect and drama to vanquish the enemy. But it is ultimately about overcoming the seemingly insuperable barriers separating life, death, and eternal life.
>
> In the edition you chose, this profoundly simple meaning is sacrificed to hysterical punctuation:
>
> And Death—*capital D*—shall be no more—*semicolon*!
>
> Death—*capital D*—*comma*—thou shalt die—*ex-clamation point*!
>
> If you go in for this sort of thing, I suggest you take up Shakespeare. Gardner's edition of the Holy Sonnets returns to the Westmoreland manuscript source of 1610—not for sentimental reasons, I assure you, but because Helen Gardner is a *scholar*. It reads:
>
> And death shall be no more, *comma*, Death thou shalt die. (14)

She continues,

> Not but a breath—a comma—separates life from life everlasting. It is very simple really. With the original punctuation restored, death is no longer something to act out on a stage, with exclamation points. It's a comma, a pause. (14)

When Vivian seems to get it, what she gets is not that the poem is simple but that it is complex, that it is wit in need of cracking. But Ashford responds, "It is *not wit*, Miss Bearing, it is truth" (15).

An aside: What do you think Edson is doing here? Isn't she having a little fun at our expense? We are the ones who fuss over commas and make truth statements out of them! Well, to fuss just a little bit more, I pulled every edition of Donne I could find off my shelves and found no evidence of "hysterical punctuation." It should be noted, however, that the real Helen Gardner in her edition of *The Divine Poems* does not follow the punctuation of the Westmoreland MS but of the first edition (1633). In fact, the 1633 edition, which can be viewed in digital form at *Digital Donne*, does not capitalize the

second "death" in the last line, but Gardner notes that "All the MSS. agree in giving the second 'death' a capital" (70).[8] Clements's edition uses the "heavy" semicolon, but no capital "D" or the dreaded exclamation point (!).

But again, is this good Donne? The debate about whether the poem is wit or truth has a second face in the play: does the poem exhibit its speaker's anxiety or confidence? As we have already noticed, Vivian has argued that "If poisonous minerals" shows us a speaker hiding from God (41). Later, her former student, whose views reflect Vivian's,[9] attempts to impress the nurse with his analysis of Donne:

> The Holy sonnets we worked on most, they were mostly about Salvation Anxiety. That's a term I made up in one of my papers, but I think it fits pretty well. Salvation Anxiety. You're this brilliant guy, I mean brilliant—this guy makes Shakespeare sound like a Hallmark card. And you know you're a sinner. And there's this promise of salvation, the whole religious thing. But you just can't deal with it.
>
> SUSIE: How come?
>
> JASON: It just doesn't stand up to scrutiny. But you can't face life without it either. So you write these screwed-up sonnets. Everything is brilliantly convoluted. Really tricky stuff. Bouncing off the walls. Like a game, to make the puzzle so complicated. (60)

Jason's Donne is indeed "suspicious of simplicity"—and also suspicious of salvation. Once again, is this good Donne? Edson is clearly on the side of truth and simplicity, rather than advocating head-spinning, witty anxiety. And the force of her own literary production is on the side of truths to be lived, not games to be played. If so, however, it remains to be seen whether Edson merely trumps up Donne as a negative example.

Part of the answer here may be found in a sense of balance Edson invites us to discover in her play. Much of the wit (if I may borrow the term) in her drama comes as the result of an incomplete comparison. We see a great deal of Vivian's suffering, but not much of her release (though it is there); we hear a great deal about her uncompromising scholarship, but not much about its alternatives (though they are there in her mentor, Ashford). We see a great deal of loneliness and just a little friendship. We see a great deal of impersonality and just a bit of kindness. Referring to her play Edson says,

> It may sound strange to say it's about kindness, but maybe the best way to talk about kindness is to show its opposite. No one in the play is particularly kind for most of the play, but the ultimate message that you walk away, having seen the opposite of kindness so much, is a real taste and thirst for kindness, I hope. (Gladstone)

This is also true of Edson's treatment of Donne: we hear a great deal about Donne's anxiety and the torturous examinations that attempt to explain his poems, but we hear little about his essential truths (though they are in evidence).

I tried an experiment with my students. I asked for volunteers to read "Death be not Proud" in three ways. The first read as if the speaker were angry with death, as if the poem were pure vituperation. Second, I asked someone to read the poem with calm, unperturbed assurance, as if death were a child to be reasoned with. Finally, someone read the poem as if she didn't really mean it, or at least was having a difficult time believing what she said. This last reader was, as it were, whistling in the dark. Now, this experiment was not conclusive, but it points to the key issue of tone. Can the poem sustain three different readings? And so is there any validity to the competing readings Edson uses in her play?

It is difficult to separate this question from larger ones we need to ask when we approach the sonnets, questions about which there is considerable debate. For instance, is the order of the sonnets meaningful, and what is the right order? Are the poems "essentially dramatic" (Wall 194) or are they essentially biographical? Do they express a settled theology and, if so, is that theology Catholic, Anglican, essentially Protestant, depressingly Calvinist, or even Arminian.[10] But the short answer is that we can find at least the three possible readings represented by my classroom recitations in the critical discourse. Gardner finds the poem "in manner and temper . . . quite undevotional" (lii), by which she means it does not have the dramatic urgency of some of the other poems. Thus she is in the calmly confident camp. So is John Wall, who says that, along with "This is my play's last scene," this poem expresses "not fear but rather confidence that the speaker's load of sins will fall away at death, and that death itself will be conquered at the Day of Judgment when 'wee wake eternally'" (190). Likewise, Lewalski calls the poem "confident" (270) and sees something like taunting in the poem: she says the speaker can "face down death" and that "in his tirade against the braggart Death (seemingly 'Mighty and dreadfull' but in fact a powerless bully) he even enacts his own imitation of Christ's victory over death" (270). Donne does an inspired dance on death's grave, as it were.

Stachniewski notices a similar tone, but spins it another way. He calls the poem only "apparently confident" (692), calling the first two lines "Highly rhetorical

and declamatory," adding that the poem's "tone is one of bravado rather than assurance. It blatantly travesties the character of death and the blatancy discloses an underlying hysteria" (691).[11] I would suggest that Stachniewski's presuppositions get in his way: he cannot imagine Reformation teaching leading to comfort, but only to despair.[12] Still, he offers a reading of the poem which is unsettled, unconfident (Vivian's "he finds God's *forgiveness* hard to believe, so he crawls under a rock to hide" [41]), and there is certainly enough anxiousness in other sonnets—to cite a few lines at random, "Oh I shall soon despair"; "Oh my black soul!"; "For if above all these my sins abound"[13]—for that emotion to bleed over into this sonnet. In other words, reading this sonnet as troubled means reading it through the sense of surrounding sonnets—or does it talk back to those?

Richard Strier makes the most compelling case for an unsettled Donne. His article offers a careful and measured overview of critical readings of the *Holy Sonnets*, and as a critic, he is a remarkably insightful reader of individual lines and poems as well as the most measured and astute at interpreting the Reformation context of early seventeenth-century poetry (his book on George Herbert is practically the only one you need). Here he is acutely aware of the interpretive choices one needs to make and often zeroes in on tone as a key feature for making sense of the sonnets (368, 370, 378). He makes for good, if knotty, reading. Strier is particularly relevant in our context because in her analysis of "If poisonous minerals" Vivian claims Strier as a former student and even points us specifically to Strier's article, mentioning "the May 1989 issue of *Modern Philology*" (41). It is fair to say that Edson validates Vivian's reading of Donne by referencing Strier.

Strier argues that the Holy Sonnets are "awry, asquint" (he borrows the metaphor from a letter by Donne; the reference is to re-stamping a coin) because they "show Donne's difficulties with and occasional successes at imprinting Calvinism on a soul that had 'first to blot out, certain impressions of the Roman religion'" (367). He explains, "the pain and confusion in many of the 'Holy Sonnets' is not that of the convinced Calvinist but rather that of a person who would like to be a convinced Calvinist but who is both unable to be so and unable to admit that he is unable to be so" (361). Here, I would suggest, is the source of the internist Jason's "Salvation Anxiety" and of Vivian's argument that Donne's wit is a defense mechanism. Strier does not spend much time on "Death be not Proud": in a footnote that talks back to Stachniewski, Strier says he finds the poem "under- rather than over-engaged" (381, n. 109), by which I think he means that Donne is just saying things, that he does not necessarily take to heart what are traditional, or doctrinal, statements about the believer's relationship to death.

Well, to cite Shakespeare, "How shall we find the concord of this discord?" (MSND 5.1.60). Does this leave us with nothing more than a multiplicity of readings? Actually, if this is so, I like what Edson does with the possibilities. In the enacting of a story where death seems to have all the resources on its side, where death surely appears to win, the unsettled readings of Donne's poem have some play. But as Ashford's analysis of the poem—and her actions in the play when she offers Vivian a calm, faith-filled exit—suggest, confidence *finally* wins out. Perhaps the process of the poem is reified in the process of Vivian's life and, indeed, in the process of our experience of the play: In Ashford's terms, "a valiant struggle with death" gives way to a mere pause between life and life everlasting.[14] That process, I believe, is what makes the play so powerful and its use of Donne so useful.

What tips the scales for me in interpreting the poem are Donne's biblical allusions. Now, merely referencing the Bible does not mean that the speaker is confident or settled. "Why have you forsaken me?" is also a biblical text. Here rather it is the nature of the texts Donne brings up, particularly 1Cor. 15, Paul's vigorous defense of the resurrection. As Lewalski puts it, "The whole sonnet, and especially the final lines, show the speaker recapitulating Paul's affirmation of the resurrection as an ultimate victory over death" (270). I suppose one could argue that Donne evokes this passage in order to invoke the arguments Paul rejects: that if Christ has not risen, then faith is vain. (vs. 14). But that argument seems intentionally skewed. Rather, the biblical texture of the poem turns it into a kind of *credo*, "this I believe." The opening address, "Death be not proud," and even its victorious tone, echoes Paul's "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (vs. 55). Donne's "For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow / Die not" evokes not only Christ's victory over death but Paul's "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (vs. 22). And "One short sleep past" suggests Paul's calling Christ "the firstfruits of them that slept" (vs. 20) as well as his promising a "mystery" that "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (vs. 51).

Consonant with an apocalyptic theme, suggested here and dramatized in some of the Holy Sonnets (Gardner says this is the subject of the first 6 sonnets in 1633), Donne's language also invokes Revelation 21:4:

> And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there by any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Not a bad gloss for the ending of Edson's play.

I lean toward a calm, settled reading of the sonnet for another reason as well. Wall suggests that "The subject of Donne's *Holy Sonnets*, is . . . not a movement of the speaker toward resolution of his relationship with God, but instead an exploration of the paradoxes of the Christian life on earth" (191). He adds that a "sense of the loss of reconciliation, after it seemed solidly achieved, is one of the basic patterns of dramatic movement in the *Holy Sonnets*. Also present in some of the sonnets is its opposite, the achieving of reconciliation, often in the face of overwhelming odds" (195). I would suggest that "Death be not Proud" is one of those moments of achieved reconciliation.[15] I say that because this poem seems to tie up some of the fears of previous poems. What are those fears? Sonnets 2 ("Oh my black soul"), 3 ("This is my play's last scene") and 4 ("At round earth's imagined corners") all suggest a fear of one's end, whether personal or cosmic. Indeed, Lewalski writes that in this sonnet Donne "is able to face down the fear of death which has haunted him in the foregoing sonnets" (270). "Death be not proud" responds to those fears with a counterargument from the faith: death is not the end; nor should it be feared by the faithful. More specifically, "Thou are a slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men" (l. 9) responds directly to "All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies / Despair, law, chance hath slain" ("At round earth's" l. 6-7), turning the tables on the meaning of death. These connections suggest that Donne considered this sonnet to be a response, or at least a counterbalance, to the arguments of some other sonnets.

To recur once again to the play's thematic concerns, the debate here between dramatic hysteria and a calm passage is, for Edson, a both/and proposition. For her audiences are indeed seeing death acted out on a stage, and the "uncompromising" (to borrow the term from Ashford) nature of Bearing's cancer calls for noisy grief. Still, Vivian grows to see, and the play illustrates, that there is also a time for quiet. Vivian says as much when she acknowledges, in a final turn that takes us into the process of her dying (and the stage direction reads "*Slowly*"), "Now is a time for simplicity. Now is a time for, dare I say it, kindness" (55). It seems that Edson also understands this about Donne: Indeed, "Death be not proud" is not Donne's ultimate statement about death. In a sermon, Donne declares, "There is no man that lives, and shall not see death," but in the same sermon he adds, "We shall see the death of Death it self in the death of Christ." The insight of both Donne and Edson is to recognize both truths.

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Notes

[1]If I veer close to religious language here, I have Edson's warrant: in an interview with Betty Carter, she explains, "It's a very religious play, and you're the first person who's ever said that to me in an interview. People always want to talk about the medicine, want to talk about the punctuation, and so I compliment you and thank you for that. It's not doctrinal, and that's a very important distinction. And it's about a point that a lot of people who call themselves religious would not necessarily commend, which is the point where you leave off even religion. Vivian has to let go of knowledge, of scholarship, of expertise, of pride, of everything, including religion" (Carter).

[2]I borrow the word from the play: see 14 and 43.

[3]Gamerman reports that Edson's "own formal studies of poetry were limited to one college course – 'a very good class, but I don't think I read any John Donne.' So she hit the library. 'If you know how to study something, you can study anything,' she [Edson] explains."

[4]Donne's poems are quoted throughout from Clements's edition.

[5]Sykes has cogently argued the importance of "Hymn to God" in the play. He comments, "Unlike the speaker in Donne's poem, Bearing is not ready to look beyond the horizons of the world in which she has successfully made her way. Thus the poem is not only descriptive of Vivian's state as an object of research laid out before her doctors; it is also theologically prescriptive, charting the course she must follow" (164-65).

[6]As Sykes puts it, "Thus the hymn may be said to adumbrate *Wit*'s surprising conclusion, when Vivian Bearing's death is succeeded by a resurrection gesture. . . . In this image, indeed, 'death doth touch the Resurrection'" (165).

[7]Sykes again: "The notion that suffering may indeed be a vehicle of God's mercy is crucial to an understanding of *Wit* (166).

[8]The beginning of her note on line 14 of this sonnet (I have just quoted from the end of the note) reads: "I have restored the light pointing of this line in 1633," by which she means replacing the semicolon with a comma. She offers that Grierson's semicolon is supported by some MSS (70).

[9]In another context, Vivian notices the similarity: "So. The young doctor, like the senior scholar, prefers research to humanity" (47).

[10]Broadly speaking, the various doctrinal situating of the poems belong to Martz (Catholic), Peterson (Anglican), Lewalski (Protestant); Stachniewski (despairingly Calvinist) and Veith (Arminian). Strier's position is the most complex.

[11]He even argues that if death were really dead, the poem would not end with the word "die" (692). He also accuses the poem of "lame logic," invokes Hamlet, says "Donne's insecurity emerges more palpably" near the end of poem and suggests "the poem ends with a theatrical gesture" (692).

[12]Strier cogently responds to this point, citing Carey: "Protestantism, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, neither intended to be nor was a 'recipe for anguish' (361). Stachniewski's own tone is strident: he takes to task every critic I have cited in this paper, among others. He derails for me when he suggests that "the very idea of personifying death . . . highlights the disparity between the bravuristic view and the actuality" (691). Personification itself, and particularly of Death, has a long tradition in both art and poetry.

[13]The references, in order are to "As due by many titles" l. 12; "Oh my black soul!" l. 1; "At round earth's" l. 10.

[14]The film version of the play obscures this point: though "Death be not Proud" is recited by Vivian, calmly, measuredly, as if saying, "Goodbye; it's okay" over the perfectly apt music of Arvo Part, there is no sense of transcendence. In the text of the play, after dying, Vivian rises from her bed, sheds her medical apparatus and her gown, and "The instant she is naked, and beautiful, reaching for the light—Lights out" (66).

[15]Perhaps this is why Gardner sees the sonnet as unlike the ones that precede it (lii) and Peterson calls it, with "If poisonous minerals," "transitional," anticipating "the transcendence of fear through love" (510). It may also explain why Strier leaves it alone: it does not directly support his reading of the sonnets.

Alexandra Glynn

Saussure Looks at William Blake: Persuasion, Memory, Power

What do de Saussure's theories about the sound image pointing to the concept being something of the senses teach us about how best to use language to persuade, if we define language as sound patterning, inscribing patterns, and accessing patterns in the memory?

Let's review some of Saussure's basic arguments. This is key: "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image. The latter is not the material sound, a purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression it makes on our senses" (Saussure 763). Language unites a concept and a sound image, a sound image that goes on in the mind; it is not just heard outside, but inside. As he says: "both terms involved in the linguistic sign are psychological and are united in the brain by an associative bond" (Saussure 763). Let us only note here that the impressions made on our senses will access things which are already in the mind: when I see "o", I access that sound in my head which I know how to make in my head because I have previously experienced it; I tie an associative bond: "The signifier, though to all appearances freely chosen with respect to the idea that it represents, is fixed, not free, with respect to the linguistic community that uses it" (Saussure 765). But most relevant to a Blake poem we will look at, we will see and hear, is this: "The two elements ['concept' and 'sound-image'] are intimately united, and each recalls the other" (Saussure 763).

Saussure says we recite things mentally—we work sounds in our heads: "The psychological character of our sound-images becomes apparent when we observe our own speech. Without moving our lips or tongue, we can talk to ourselves or recite mentally a selection of verse." I only wish to press his concept of the sound-image as an impression on senses for the purposes of owning memories, that is, of inscribing patterns, of organizing and owning the boxes of references an audience's mind has.

Review the following poem, a verse which you will "recite mentally" (Saussure 763):

I dreamt a Dream! What can it mean?
And that I was a maiden Queen:
Guarded by an Angel mild:
Witless woe was neer beguiled!

And I wept both night and day
And he wip'd my tears away
And I wept both day and night
And hid from him my heart's delight

So he took his wings and fled:
Then the morn blush'd rosy red:
I dried my tears & armed my fears
With ten thousand shields and spears.

Soon my Angel came again;
I was arm'd, he came in vain:
For the time of youth was fled
And grey hairs were on my head.

Let us put another set of words together and oppose it to the above poem, so we can see the above poem in opposition to another way of inscribing or calling and recalling sound patterns. From the *Norton Field Guide to Writing with Readings*'s new sample readings:

> "One aspect of Harry Potter's appeal is that of the apparently ordinary child who turns out to be special" (663).

The writer of the Norton example has taken her pen in hand and composed signifiers that will best call up, according to the students reading in her audience, certain ideas, or larger concepts. She wrote a sentence with words set together one after another "aspect", "appeal" "apparently" "ordinary" "turns out" and "special". All these sound images she intends her audience to take separately, and the fact that "ordinary" and "apparently" end with the same sound, for example, she does not exploit. More important, perhaps, she intends the words to function as tickets to a play. The audience is to be led by them quickly away from the actual signifier, say, the word "appeal" to the things that make for appeal, to go towards the concepts. By these signifiers Norton intends to compel her audience quickly away from the signifier, the sound images, to the play, which is the real show, not the tickets themselves.

This writer "frees" her audience, her audience must prop and cast in their minds for what references are there already in our minds, what other sound images to attach to the concept, which are cultural interpretations, and ideas to which any number of words might be used to describe—she does not want to force us to use her words, and keep them. She also does not reach for patterns.

But consider Blake. He takes pen in hand to set on paper linked signifiers, and sound patterns. His intent is to make the tickets to the play part of the play. He intends to have greater control over the casting and lines of the play in the person's mind. To accomplish this, he has two goals. The first is to use sound patterns to continuously draw his audience from taking from their store of concepts and bank of sound-images, to his own store, by besieging his audiences' senses with sound patterns. The second is to use many associations that he knows his audience has, to trap them in this sense-web, and to inscribe his ways of doing language on their memories, to make their associations associate with his associations, the way he wants their associations to be associated with other associations. Blake tries to prevent the reader from moving quickly away from the signifiers, the words such as "aspect" "appeal" "turns out" and such, towards the readers own internal frame of reference, because Blake will have tripped the reader at the gate, catching his memory up in a web of sound patterns. You have seen the Norton writer's writing, one sentence of it. Compare to Blake again:

I dreamt a Dream! What can it mean?
And that I was a maiden Queen:
Guarded by an Angel mild:
Witless woe was neer beguiled!

And I wept both night and day
And he wip'd my tears away
And I wept both day and night
And hid from him my heart's delight

So he took his wings and fled:
Then the morn blush'd rosy red:
I dried my tears & armed my fears
With ten thousand shields and spears.

Soon my Angel came again;
I was arm'd, he came in vain:
For the time of youth was fled
And grey hairs were on my head.

What deliberated sounds are going on? None in Norton to speak of. But how many trip and captures are in this second story?

-"I dreamt a dream". The repetition is a pattern, the slanting of the vowel sound from the vowel sound of "dreamt" to that of "dream" is another trip, the one sound trips back towards the other.

-Another is "mean", rhyming with "Dream" and then "Queen". At "mean" one also has been conditioned to expect patterns, so the word itself contains a cousin pattern: the "m" and the "n" are both vocalized.

-Since "dreamt" and "wept" and "wip'd" and "wept" are a pattern of verbs ending in hard stops, the final verb of the first two stanzas "hid" gets taken into this pattern as a grey cousin of the sibling other verbs, along with "Guarded" and "beguiled", which are also of a pattern, having both the "g" in them.

-The "And"s beginning the second stanza are of a pattern, all the rhymes are of a pattern, "night and day" and "day and night" are of a pattern, which is related to the pattern of "heart's delight" via the rhyme of night/delight"; "heart's delight" is related to "hid" through the alliteration of "h".

-Another intricate pattern web is in verse three, where the fled/red rhyme patterns with the fears/spears rhyme through the alliteration of "f" in "fled" and "fears"; "red" patterns with "rosy" through alliteration, which patterns with "morn" through alliteration, which patterns with "blush'd" because it is the verb governing the noun "morn"; note also that since "fled" appears also in the final verse, it patterns with "head" and leads one to believe the "Angel" might be allied with the time of youth.

Let me stop this random pattern-search now, and only plead: in this vague and haphazard sketch through this poem, please only notice one thing: the patterns, some of the patterns at least, are built, in large part, on sounds. It might also be remarked that in all poetry, when we are looking at feet, we are looking at which syllable has a louder sound than the other(s). No sound difference, no feet!

We have not only not remarked on the feet, as we might later, but we have not yet remarked on the raids on the bank of concepts this poem deliberately makes. Just to take nouns, and compare to the line Norton wrote, every line takes some noun (concrete, or see-able noun) in the bank of not just Blake's audience, but also a modern audience, and puts that concept held in the minds of the audience, into that realm into which he attempts with his poem to persuade and in which he attempts to keep them held: "Dream" "Queen", "Angel", "night", "day", "tears", "day", "night", "wings", "tears", "shields", "spears", Angel", "hairs".

These are quite common nouns; Blake wants to take them away from us and make them the way he thinks they should be, so he catches them into patterns and rearranges our cultural baggage in our mind, perhaps without us knowing it. The most possessing raid, we might note, is probably in the last line. The last lines words: "And grey hairs were on my head" will alert his readers to their concept from Hosea 7:9: "yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not." He wants to make what we think that means to be what he tells us it means, and he wants us to stick with those words: "grey hairs", not others near them, and not unpacking a metaphor, but keeping us where we were, with "grey hairs" and saying, stay here thinking of this lesson from Hosea, from me, as this lesson: "grey hairs".

Perhaps we ought to look more closely into the part of Saussure's theory that perhaps is a truth discovered but not yet assigned "to its proper place" (Saussure 764). Somebody who knows how to catalogue these devices could list many more ways (to use Saussure's language) a concept and the sound-images, which are "intimately united" would not be thought of as just "each recalls the other" but also potentially each calls, recalls, and re-recalls the other, again, capturing the audience into a web of sound patterns, and keeping them finely bound there. A related question: should we in fact "avoid speaking of the 'phonemes' that make up the words" (Saussure 763) so much, given that these can be exploited for persuasion? A third related question, concerning the "imprint of the sound, the impression it makes on our senses" (Saussure 763), what does this say about authority; that is, how does Blake conceive of his own authority, his power, and how power is gotten and held over minds of others?